PLAYSTATION 3 + PS2 + PSP

PlayStation®

Official Magazine Australia

THE DARKNESS

STAR WARS FORCE UNLEASHED

INTENSE JEDI BATTLES IN FULLY DESTRUCTIBLE AND OBSCENELY DETAILED WORLDS MAKE THIS THE MOST EXCITING STAR WARS CHAPTER EVER!

ISSUE 2 APRIL 2007
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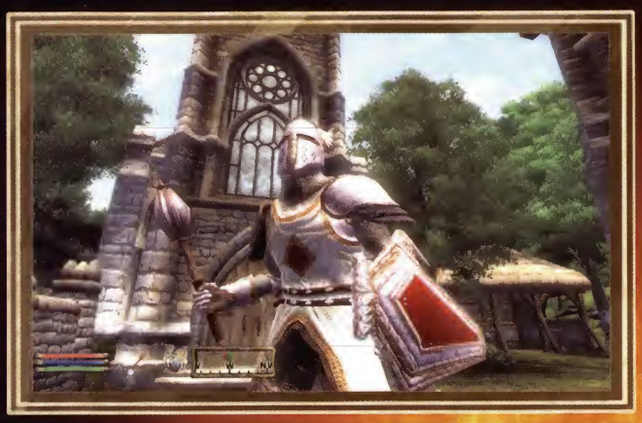

The 2006 Game of the Year comes to PlayStation®3

"The hype is justified: the game is excellent and it will be the RPG to own in 2007."

Official PlayStation® Magazine

"This is exactly what a next-gen game should look like"

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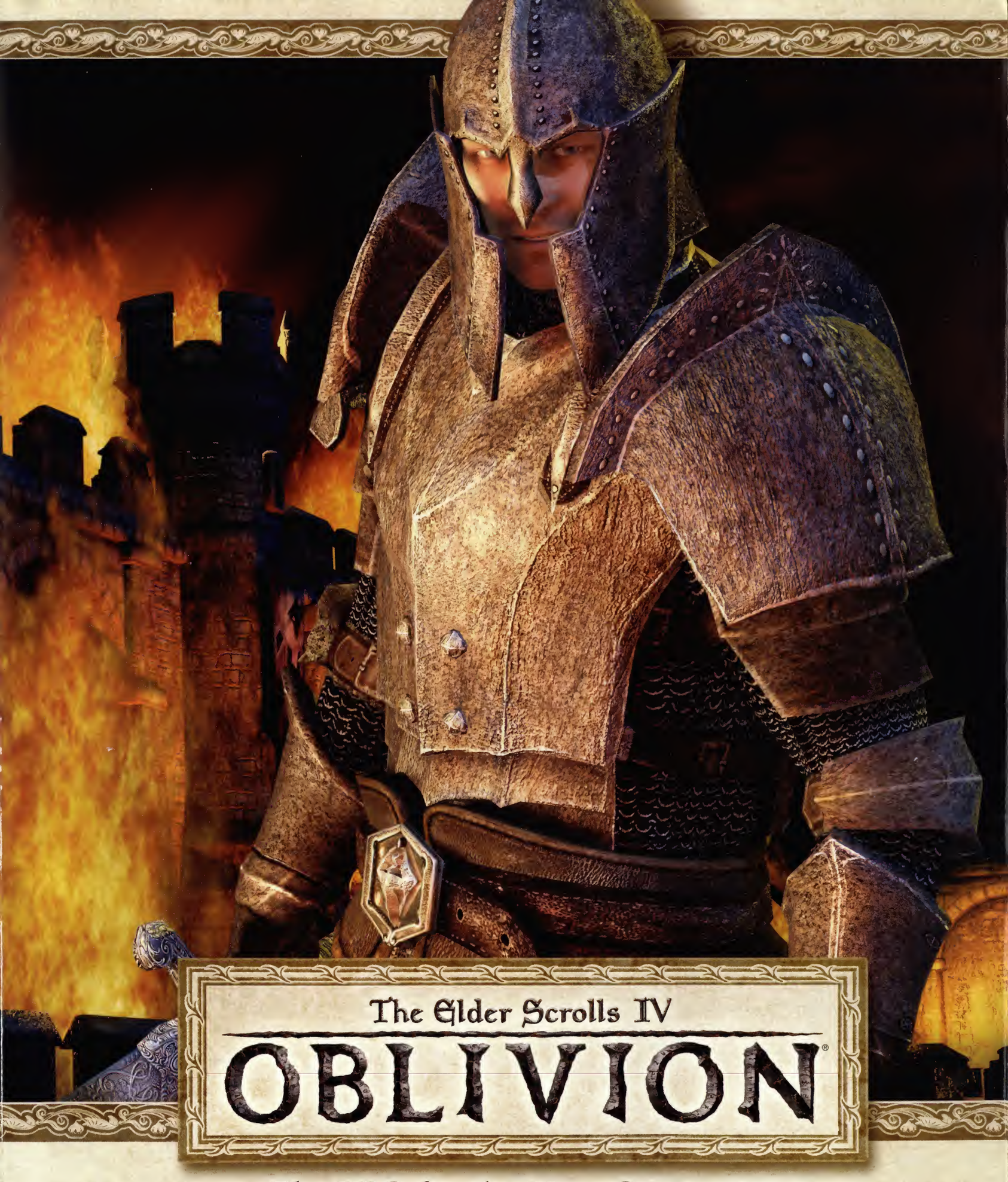
M Moderate fantasy violence

PLAYSTATION 3

Bethesda SOFTWORKS a ZeniMax Media company

UBISOFT



The RPG for the Next Generation

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This is living

PLAYSTATION 3

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WIN!

An amazing opportunity to see the PLAY! gaming symphony spectacular!

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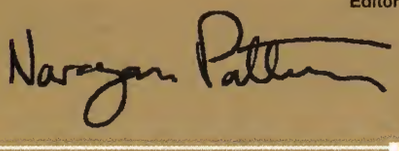
EDITOR'S LETTER

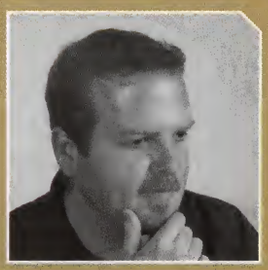
Talk about a manic month of PS3 mania. *MotorStorm*'s 10/10 racing perfection has been regularly reaching out with its dirty mitts to drag our 'not really struggling that much and quite easy to convince actually' butts back in for another lap. We've also had a whirlwind tour of LucasArts insanely advanced US studio. There's seriously more sci-fi tech on that site than the Death Star (that's actually the name of the server 'room' they have an entire floor devoted to – coincidence, we think not). LucasArts has put this computing power to innovative use by creating literally the most ground-breaking new tech ever.

We were also lucky enough to play Take 2's nightmarish *The Darkness*, a freaky shooter that could be the sleeper hit of the year. The PS3's awe-inspiring Aussie media launch was another highlight, as was scrambling to cover the flood of cracking new PS3 announcements and belting through the huge range of launch titles. We don't even remember what quiet sounds like anymore. I'd also like to assure you that we're hard at work putting together the biggest playable demo disc in history. Blu-ray discs are naturally more complicated to create than DVDs but we're on track to have a bumper PS3 demo disc bundled with Issue #4. We appreciate your patience on this and you can bet we'll have a truckload of sensational freebies bundled in with Issue #3 also.

NARAYAN PATTISON
Editor



WHAT WE'LL NEGLECT FOR PS3...



TRISTAN OGILVIE

Sadly I'll be neglecting you, the readers. You see, this is my last issue of *OPS*. Why? Well, I'm dying... to tell you where I'm going, but unfortunately I can't. It's complicated... government... top secret mission – I can't say too much. But thanks for reading; it's been a pleasure to have been read. Cheers.

LUKE REILLY

Personal hygiene. You see this facial hair? None of it is actually mine; it's other people's that has latched onto my greasy, unwashed skin. I've been playing *MotorStorm* that much. There might be some pubes in there and some of it may be dog. I don't know, and frankly, I don't want to know.

PHILLIP JORGE

Sleep. Yeah... I'm not going to do that anymore. Why waste time being unconscious when you could be playing PS3? While you sissies are sleeping your lives away I'll be getting insanely good at *Resistance*. As if Insomniac (hello!) won't hire me when they see my mad no-sleep skills.

NICK O'SHEA

I'm sorry, PS2. I mean, we had some good times and all, but it's over now. My sexy new squeeze can do everything you can and so much more – if you know what I mean. Oh, and by the way, I'm taking the *FFXII* saves with me.

ANTHONY O'CONNOR

I'd say I'd neglect washing, shaving and bathing – but I don't do much of that anyway. I might stay in the same pair of pants for a month. Yes, that'll be the go. From PS3 launch I shall neglect the changing of my strides. By the way, ladies – I'm single.

DAVE KOZICKI

As the resident swinger and playa, I've had to put all the beautiful babies on hold for a while. Unfortunately, this just makes them keener. Now I've gotta change my number to get some gaming in peace. What's that? Jessica Alba's calling again? Sheesh!

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EDITORIAL & DESIGN
EDITOR: Narayan Pattison
narayan@derwenthoward.com.au
DEPUTY EDITOR: Tristan Ogilvie
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: Luke Reilly
Phone: (02) 8305 6921
WRITERS: Dave Kozicki, Chris Dzelde, Anthony O'Connor, Nick O'Shea, Mark Serrels Jessica Greene, James Ellis, Toby McCasker, Jonti Davis, Michael Butler
CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Cook
ART DIRECTOR: Phillip Jorge
DESIGNER: Lyza Dator

PUBLISHING & CIRCULATION
GROUP PUBLISHING DIRECTOR: Karl Penn
CIRCULATION ENQUIRIES: (02) 8305 6900
SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER: Michelle Starr
michelle@derwenthoward.com.au
CIRCULATION CONSULTANT: Danielle Gannan
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Graham Hood

ADVERTISING
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Nick Cutler
COMMERCIAL MANAGER GAMING: Alex Brereton
alex@derwenthoward.com.au
Phone :: (02) 8305 6909
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR: Bree Higgerson

HOW TO CONTACT US:
TEL: (02) 8305 6900 **FAX:** (02) 8305 6999
EMAIL: OPS@derwenthoward.com.au
Derwent Howard Pty Ltd
P.O. Box 1037
Bondi Junction NSW 1355

WANT TO SUBSCRIBE?: 136 116
(NZ RESIDENTS +61 2 9282 8000)
Fax (02) 9267 4363
www.ops2m.com.au/subs
Or at www.derwenthoward.com.au/subs

MANAGEMENT
DIRECTORS: Jim Flynn, Nathan Berkley
FINANCE DIRECTOR: Gary Peroy
FINANCIAL CONTROLLER: Niall Raeside
MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT: Bryan Davis

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SHOUT OUTS: Tristan "T-Man" Ogilvie – the mag won't be the same without you
Happy 5th Birthday Jadye - we love you!

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September 1951

We have been fighting the enemy for three months. Our troops are becoming frail. They began to break through all our defences.

The fear in my brothers eyes carries me through from hour to hour.

MA 15+ Strong combat violence RESTRICTED

RESISTANCE FALL OF MAN

INSOMNIAC GAMES

playstation.com.au resistancefallofman.com

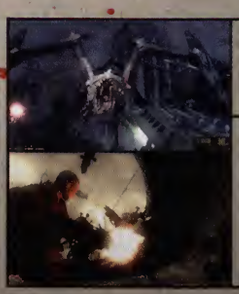
This is living

СОЮЗА ССР
156

September 1951

We must stay true to our beliefs. A belief that we can crush this evil plague sweeping across our land.
The battle is just beginning.

humanity must prevail



"Our troops have been slaughtered, Europe has fallen, and the only remaining hope of saving humanity from the Chimera is you Lt Hale … Good luck".

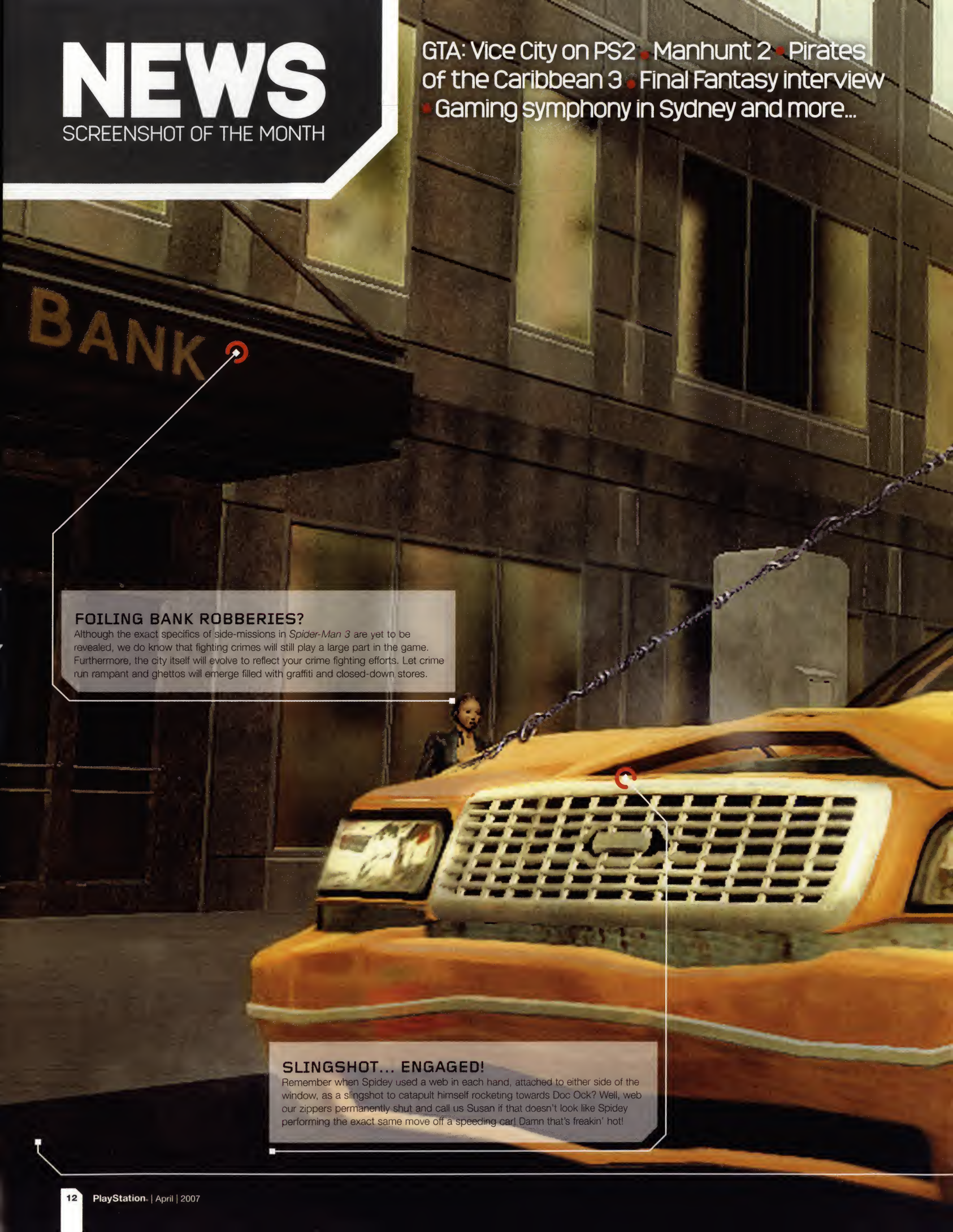
Resistance: Fall of Man is a first person action game exclusive to the PLAYSTATION 3. It is 1951 and historic warfare collides with a deadly race which is threatening to wipeout all humans. You must take on the role of US Ranger Nathan Hale, and use one of the most amazing arsenals of weaponry ever seen to fight back for mankind.

PLAYSTATION 3

NEWS

SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH

GTA: Vice City on PS2 • Manhunt 2 • Pirates of the Caribbean 3 • Final Fantasy interview • Gaming symphony in Sydney and more...



FOILING BANK ROBBERIES?

Although the exact specifics of side-missions in *Spider-Man 3* are yet to be revealed, we do know that fighting crimes will still play a large part in the game. Furthermore, the city itself will evolve to reflect your crime fighting efforts. Let crime run rampant and ghettos will emerge filled with graffiti and closed-down stores.

SLINGSHOT... ENGAGED!

Remember when Spidey used a web in each hand, attached to either side of the window, as a slingshot to catapult himself rocketing towards Doc Ock? Well, web our zippers permanently shut and call us Susan if that doesn't look like Spidey performing the exact same move off a speeding car! Damn that's freakin' hot!

BIGGEST APPLE YET

If you compare these New York streets to those in *True Crime: New York City* (don't worry, we've already done it) you'll see some definite similarity, although they're now sexier hi-def versions. Kudos to Activision for not feeling the need to re-map every street and instead focusing its time on cutting-edge gameplay.

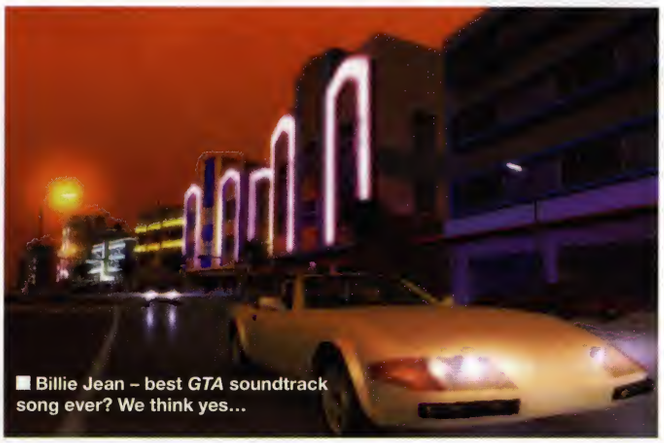
BACK IN BLACK

Spidey's infamous black suit is a fully-playable alter ego in *Spider-Man 3*. For those who don't know their Spidey history, the black suit is a living alien entity that grants the wearer super strength. The suit entity is evil and is later ditched by Spidey to become Venom. Wearing it in-game augments your strength and combo roster.

WHEELY GOOD

We don't want to sound like drooling graphics whores but as if this car isn't 'snort a line of wasabi, head-explodingly' detailed. Seriously, it's a game about slinging around on webs cracking crims and yet they still had time to detail this car down to every dented panel and groove of glass in the headlights. Sheesh that's impressive.

■ "Damn, I look good in this suit. I mean, *real* good. Hey, everybody? Come and see how good I look..."



■ Billie Jean – best *GTA* soundtrack song ever? We think yes...

PS3 PS2 PSP

VICE VICE BABY!

Vice City gets an upgrade

Considering the phenomenal success of *GTA: Liberty City Stories* on both PSP and PS2, it should come as little surprise to hear that Rockstar is bringing us another serve of PSP porting goodness as *GTA: Vice City Stories* moves from handheld to the comforts of your own home.

We've gotta admit, the guys at Rockstar really know what they're doing. The PS2 version is promising a greater draw distance, sharper graphics and modified controls. The only detracting factor is that the multiplayer hasn't been included, just as with *GTA: LCS*, which is really quite unfortunate. However, we expect online multiplayer to form a tasty chunk of *GTAIV* so the future is bright.

The one thing that is somewhat concerning is that the re-release of these outstanding PSP games on PS2 may be stepping on the tiny toes of our infant, baby PSP. Part of the draw of these titles, and others like them, was that these were only available on PSP. If every great PSP game were ported over to PS2 it would likely be the kiss of death for our little buddy. Sure, we know there's a lot more people who own PS2s than PSPs, but how about a little something to keep us wandering gamers feeling a bit special... okay, Rockstar? Are you with us? **DK**

PS3 PS2 PSP

THE HUNTED

In surprising news, Rockstar has announced the sequel to its most controversial game ever. *Manhunt 2* will be available this winter on PS2 and PSP. *Manhunt 2* is the debut title from the newly formed Rockstar London studio, which is developing the game in conjunction with series creator Rockstar North.

"With *Manhunt 2* we have tried to create a game that stays close to the original concept of chilling suspense and stealth, while pushing the game design and storytelling forward," said Sam Houser, founder and executive producer of Rockstar Games.

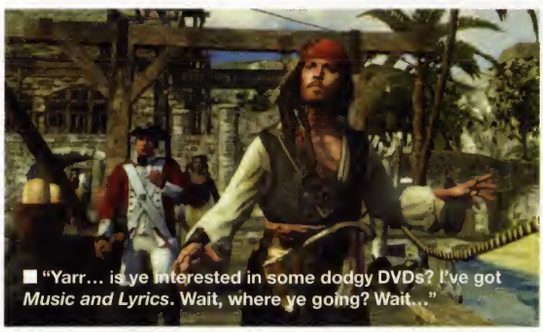
Although Rockstar has been predictably tight-lipped about the sequel we do know it unravels a suspicious project involving mind control at a hospital for the criminally insane. We'll keep you posted on the game, and its probable battle with classification, in the coming months (the original was banned in Australia after a year on the shelves). **LR**

■ "Mum... uh... Dad? What are you doing?"

PS3 PS2 PSP

AVAST!

Pirates: they were so ahead of their time. Yo ho? You think 50 Cent invented that? We recently had a quick glimpse of the upcoming *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*, based, of course, on the upcoming film. Perhaps surprisingly (the last few *Pirates* games have erred on the wrong side of shoddy) it doesn't look half bad. They even nailed Captain Jack's trademark swagger. If you're the kind of landlubber who doesn't mind your swashes buckled, your timbers shivered and your men... blown down, keep your eyes peeled for this one. **LR**



■ "Yarr... is ye interested in some dodgy DVDs? I've got *Music and Lyrics*. Wait, where ye going? Wait..."

PS3 PS2 PSP

GIRL GAMERS LOVE HUNKA CHUNKA

Apparently girls who play games put out like firemen. That's if you believe an alleged survey conducted by UK game rental company Gametart. They claim to have asked a test group of lady gamers how often they get laid, and the average response was 4.3 times a week, more than non-gamer girls who clock in at 3.2 times a week.

Reasons for this result may include a) The site's owner only asked one girl – his whorish nerd sister b) Wrinkly granny's aren't in there to bring the figure down c) Girls who play games are in public less, where shagging is frowned upon. **JE**

DVD GIVEAWAY

BON VOYAGE

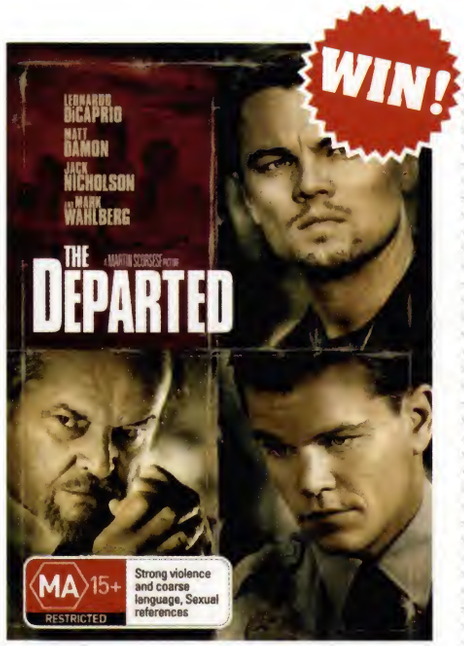
Featuring a star-studded cast, the Oscar winning *The Departed* is a gritty story of power and corruption. Thanks to Warner Bros. we've got eight *The Departed* prize packs to give away that each include *The Departed* on DVD, *GoodFellas* on DVD, *The Aviator* on DVD as well as a *The Departed* T-shirt. For your chance to win a pack answer the following question, mark your entry 'The Departed giveaway' and follow the entry details below.

QUESTION: Name the Hollywood legend who directed all the films in this giveaway.

■ "You throw a punch at me and it's going to be 'What's *beating* Gilbert Grape?'"

HOW TO ENTER

Send entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line, or post them to *OPS* Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355 with the name of the competition CLEARLY MARKED on the envelope. Include the name of the competition, your name, age, email address, contact number and, most importantly, your full address and postcode! All competitions close April 24. All competitions are open to residents of Australia and New Zealand.



■ "Yo, didn't you see me in *Boogie Nights*? That thing wasn't a prosthetic..."

PS3 PS2 PSP

THAT'S HOW PHIL ROLLS

Sony Worldwide Studios president Phil Harrison let the cat out of the bag recently, admitting that he has been playing the next version of the super-cute platformer, *LocoRoco*. While Phil wasn't specific, we suspect he's talking about *LocoRoco Mobile*, which was shown recently in Japan at the Sony-Ericsson SO703i unveiling, rather than a fully-fledged sequel for PSP or PS3. Come on, Phil – you know as well as we do that *LocoRoco* and the SIXAXIS go together like Eva Mendes and jelly wrestling. How about ponying up a downloadable PS3 version on the PlayStation Store? **NO**

PS3 PS2 PSP

NAUGHTY DOG GAME TITLE LEAKED

Details of the unnamed Naughty Dog project that was shown at last year's E3 have finally come to light. The title of the jungle-bound action-adventure has been revealed to be *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, a reference to the 16th century English naval commander, Sir Francis Drake. Ironically, this new info was discovered in the online resume of Naughty Dog's lead environmental artist Rob Adams, along with all new screenshots that haven't been officially released. When asked for official confirmation on the leaked information, Sony Computer Entertainment has declined to comment. Ten bucks says that Rob is copping a paddlin' right about now. **JE**

INFO NUDGE

Everything else that's fit to print (and some that's not)

HIT ME SINGSTAR ONE MORE TIME

Sony has confirmed its new title for those *SingStar* fans out there (you know who you are). *SingStar Pop Hits* is coming with 30 new tracks to test your larynx (that's your voice box). Let your little siblings and girlfriend rejoice! The sequel's top-shelf tracklist will see Idol wannabes belting out Britney Spears' 'Baby One More Time', All Saints' 'Black Coffee' and even Scissor Sisters' 'I Don't Feel Like Dancin".

To even out the playing field, Fall Out Boy's 'Dance Dance' and Gorillaz's 'Clint Eastwood' will allow teenage boys to angst it out, while U2's 'Beautiful Day' will allow the more mature men to wear sunglasses inside. Warm those microphones up for an April release.

MEGA QUIZ BEATS BIG QUIZ

You heard it here folks, the popular PS2 quiz show game just got bigger. Sporting a massive 5000 new questions, *Buzz!: The Mega Quiz* will support up to 8 players at once, along with 16 characters to choose from. The new questions will fall under categories of films, television, sport, celebrities and music clips. New game modes, such as Winner Stays on and Final Countdown will give more challenges to your 'friend' next to you.

It also keeps the games fresh without encountering the same questions on the same night. Expect this quiz to "come on down" late April.

WHEELMAN RUNS ON DIESEL

Who would've thought Vin Diesel would be a Dungeons & Dragons fan [*Or indeed a fan of fried chicken? At least, that's what it looks like he's eating – Ed.*]? The action star's videogame company Tigon Studios will be releasing a next gen game on the PS3, in conjunction with his upcoming film, *The Wheelman*. Diesel announced in a joint statement with Midway Games, Paramount Pictures and MTV Films that *The Wheelman* will be the "first integrated franchise" for both industries. Written by Rich Wilkes, the man who wrote xXx, *The Wheelman* will star Diesel as an expert getaway driver who leaves retirement to "protect a woman from his past". Expect the action-packed game to appear close to the last quarter of 2007.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

The PS3 is finally here, and there's no doubt that it's certainly been worth the wait.

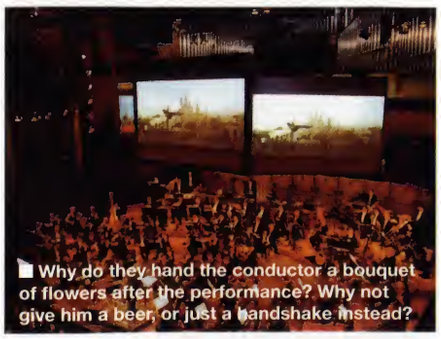
But all I hear these days is HD-this and 1080p-that, and I'm getting a little overwhelmed by it all. I'm not saying that grabbing a brand new high resolution LCD television won't make your new PS3 look hotter than Scarlett Johansson and Heather Graham making out in a sauna on the surface of the sun, but I think it's important that PS2 fans don't get put off from upgrading just because they think that they're obliged to fork out an extra few grand for a new display when they pick up their shiny new PS3.

I'm going to let you all in on a little secret [*Wait, you're not going to tell them about those poems I wrote you, are you? – Ed.*] I'm currently playing my PS3 on a 68cm CRT 4:3 television [*Phew. I mean, damn it! – Ed.*] And do you know what? I'm still having the best experience of my gaming life.

Just because you don't have an HDTV, doesn't mean that *MotorStorm* doesn't still look amazing, or *Resistance* doesn't feature the best weapons ever made, or that playing *Super Rub-a-Dub* from the PlayStation Store is any less hilarious with the SIXAXIS tilt controls.

So don't be so shallow – looks aren't everything, you know. Unless you can easily afford to upgrade them – right, Victoria Beckham?

Jessica Greene, Games Writer



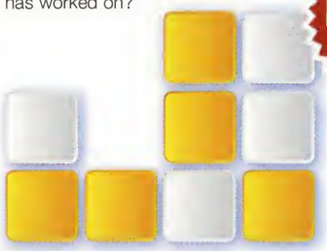
■ Why do they hand the conductor a bouquet of flowers after the performance? Why not give him a beer, or just a handshake instead?

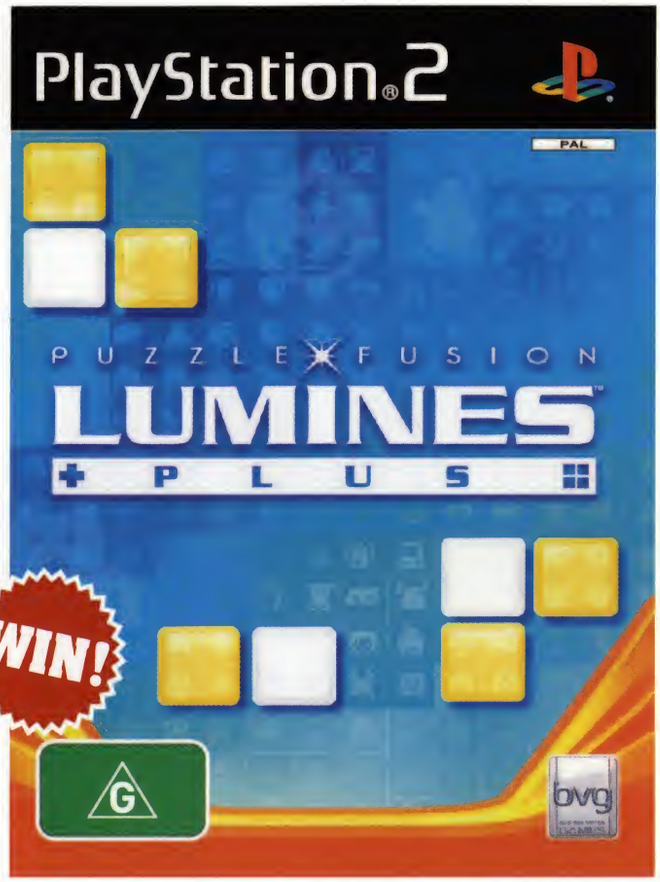
PS3 PS2 PSP

THAT'S ALWAYS A PLUS

***Lumines* – more hypnotic** than a bikini contest and quite possibly the best puzzle came to come out since *Tetris*. Finally the PSP classic has made the transition to PS2, and thanks to Funtastic, we've got ten copies of *Lumines Plus* for PS2 to give away. For a chance to win a copy answer the following question, mark your entry 'Lumines Plus giveaway' and follow the entry details on page 15.

QUESTION: What are the names of two other music-based games that *Lumines* creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi has worked on?





HAVE A PLAY!

Experience the PLAY! videogame symphony

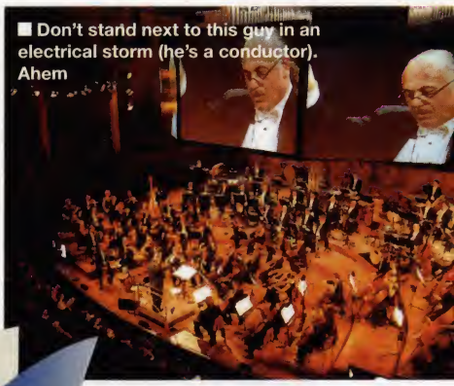
The Sydney Opera house is hosting a once in a lifetime experience for videogame fans in June. Giant screens... A full orchestra and choir... A superstar conductor... And the epic sounds of your favourite videogames. This is PLAY! A videogame symphony.

More than 20 of the biggest blockbuster videogames will be performed at the Sydney Opera House in a polyphonic, sight-and-sound, live music extravaganza. Imagine classics like *Final Fantasy*, *Metal Gear Solid*, *Castlevania*, *World of Warcraft*, *Kingdom Hearts*, *Sonic the Hedgehog* and many more being performed like you've never seen them before.

Performed by the Sydney Symphony (with PLAY! Principal Conductor and Music Director Arnie Roth) PLAY! features award-winning music from the biggest and best videogames in history. As well as the epic live soundtrack you'll also experience amazing visuals thanks to the massive cinema screens suspended over the orchestra. Truly memorable and stunning moments have been captured from the games to be shown alongside the music.

After enjoying a huge commercial and critical success across North America and Europe, PLAY! is now heading to Australia's Sydney Opera House. If you're a gamer, a soundtrack fan, an anime buff or a serious music lover, PLAY! offers an amazing combination of cutting edge gaming with the magic of a live symphony.

PLAY! will begin on 20 June and continue for a limited time. Head across to www.sydneyoperahouse.com or phone 02 9250 7777 for your chance to experience gaming in a whole new way. **JG**



■ Don't stand next to this guy in an electrical storm (he's a conductor). Ahem

www.playstation.com.au/PS3

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UBISOFT

PG Mild violence, Mild coarse language

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This is living

PLAYSTATION 3

ONE MAN BAND

OPS chats to Hitoshi Sakimoto, the man behind the music of *Final Fantasy XII*

OPS: Where did you look for the inspiration for your *FFXII* music?
HS: Mostly just from visuals I get from clients. The *FF* series has changes that really stand out. So I had no trouble finding inspiration from there. The storyline is initially plotted out by Mr Matuno, and he once again has made a very interesting plot, which makes it easier for me to find inspiration.

There was one problem that I faced during the composing, which was when the initial track list arrived. Many of the scenes are made with vague descriptions. So for example, making music for "desert1" through to "desert4" or "town1" to "town4" was a tough task. [laughs].

So it is all from visual scenes that I get inspiration from. For the main theme, it was a tough task but what was needed was set out straight so I did not have trouble with ideas.

OPS: How does the process of composing specific emotional tracks for a game? Do you need to see the gameplay before you start?
HS: The general process is that I get the list of music wanted with available visuals at the time and start from there. If there isn't much material or I don't understand from descriptions, I directly ask the clients. Usually the tone is like, "What sort of desert is it?" To which I get a reply like, "Just a normal one… and it rains sometimes." [laughs]

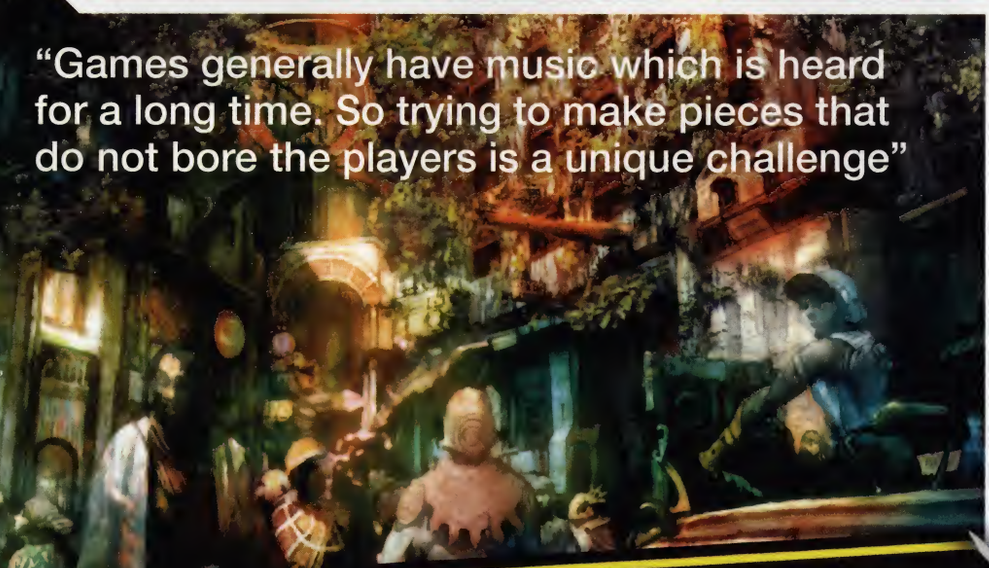
OPS: How has you role changed over the last ten years as videogames have gotten more and more advanced?
HS: As well the advancement of games, the gaming industry has grown quite large, and tasks involved have split into specific departments. So when I started off, I was just a programmer. Then I moved onto becoming a music programmer, then I was involved in manipulation and sound effects. Now I have much more talented staff better than me who take care of this. So now, I think it is about the overall quality of the production, for me personally.

I loved playing games and that is where everything started from. In the old days a game was made by one person. The person made the program, drew characters and made the music. So I have drawn characters before too. But as time passed, there were more talented character drawers, and jobs started being allocated…

OPS: How does composing for videogames differ from composing for movies?
HS: Games generally have music that is heard for a long time. So trying to make pieces that do not bore the players over long periods is a unique challenge. Also I think that it is more possible in games to use multiple music pieces to build a view for something. What I mean is, using some five, six music pieces to imply some sort of image to the user. Even obscure use of music pieces has some results and this is what I have been doing with my works.

OPS: What sort of project would you like to work on next?
HS: I do have something in the long run… but for now… Since I really like science fiction, something to do with science fiction would be great!

"Games generally have music which is heard for a long time. So trying to make pieces that do not bore the players is a unique challenge"



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+5%

ENERGY REQUIRED TO CONTAIN YOUR EXCITEMENT:

+97%

MAN FUEL

Ergo Proxy

エルゴプラクシー

Malice implanted by the creator

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WIN!

"I came *this* close to nunchucking you!"

PS3 PS2 PSP

GET A DOUBLE DOSE OF TURTLE POWER!

The world's gone retro, and we couldn't be happier. Neither could Ubisoft. That's why we're giving ten of you lucky scamps an '80s flashback, 1-2 combo (albeit in updated, trendy new fashion). Get a quick jab to the face with *TMNT: Special Edition* for PS2, followed by a roundhouse to the back of the head with the fifth season of the animated new *TMNT* series. It's time to sharpen those swords and sais, whip out the nunchaku and break out the bo staff – the Turtles are back with a bang, baby! For a chance to win answer the following question, mark your entry 'TMNT giveaway' and see the entry details on page 15.

QUESTION: Which long forgotten rapper made a cameo appearance in *TMNT2: The Secret of the Ooze*?

PS3 PS2 PSP

ON A WING AND A PRAYER

Think you look better in a leather cap and goggles? Like having your balls to the wall? (Hey, it's fighter pilot banter – look it up). Want a taste of the air up there? Thanks to Ubisoft we've got five copies of the high-flying, dogfighting and plane-smiting *Blazing Angels* to give away. For a chance to win all you need do is answer the following question and be sure to follow the entry instructions on page 15. Mark your entry 'Blazing Angels giveaway'.

QUESTION: Which of the following is widely regarded as the greatest fighter plane of WWII?

a) P Diddy
b) Pee Wee Herman
c) PJ Harvey
d) P-51

We love a good dogfight – as long as it doesn't involve Bulldogs (their fans get too rowdy)

WIN!

"Mayday! Mayday!"
"What are you on about? It's April still?"

DVD GIVEAWAY

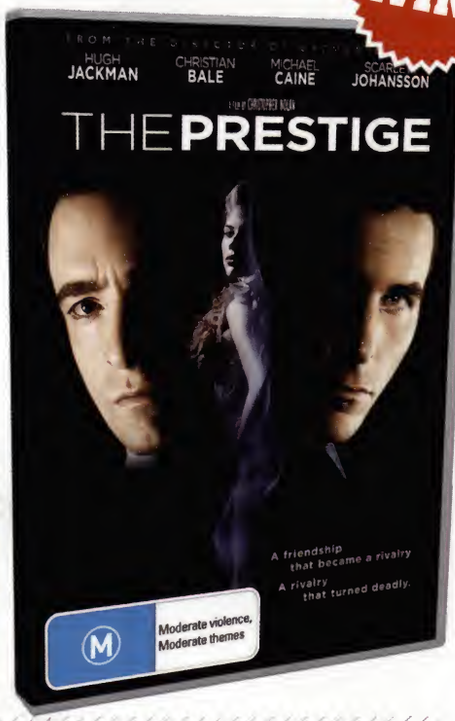
THE PLEDGE, THE TURN, THE PRESTIGE

WIN!

Christian Bale and Hugh Jackman star in *The Prestige*, a tale of two Houdini-esque illusionists locked in a rivalry that knows no bounds. Thanks to Warner Bros. we've got eight DVD packs to give away that each include *The Prestige*, *Batman Begins* and *V for Vendetta*. For your chance to win a pack answer the following question, mark your entry 'The Prestige giveaway' and follow the entry details on page 15.

QUESTION:: Which superhero did Christian Bale play in *Batman Begins*?

a) Powdered Toast Man
b) Batman
c) Jesus
d) Chairman Kaga



GAME DESIGN 101

The Power of (e)motion

What does it mean for game developers that the PS3 controller – the SIXAXIS – has six axes of motion-sensitivity – in three planes (x, y and z) and three attitudes (pitch, roll and yaw)?

It's a good question. There's no doubt that developers will take a little time to really come to grips with the implications of the technology. First up, we'll see driving and flight games that allow you to use the SIXAXIS as a steering wheel or control stick.

But the more intriguing uses are still to come. Apart from freeing up other input devices (namely sticks and buttons), there's also a great opportunity to simplify control systems and game interfaces.

The benefit here is that games become even more immersive. Consider: the PlayStation 3 has two competitors. One has hi-def graphics. One has a motion-sensitive controller. Only the PS3 has both, which means only the PS3 can claim to offer both next-generation graphics and next-generation controls.

What will developers make of this? (Apart from 'awesome games'?) For the hardcore, there will be games that allow an unprecedented level of control. For the newcomers and casual players, there will be games that are easier and more intuitive to control than ever before.

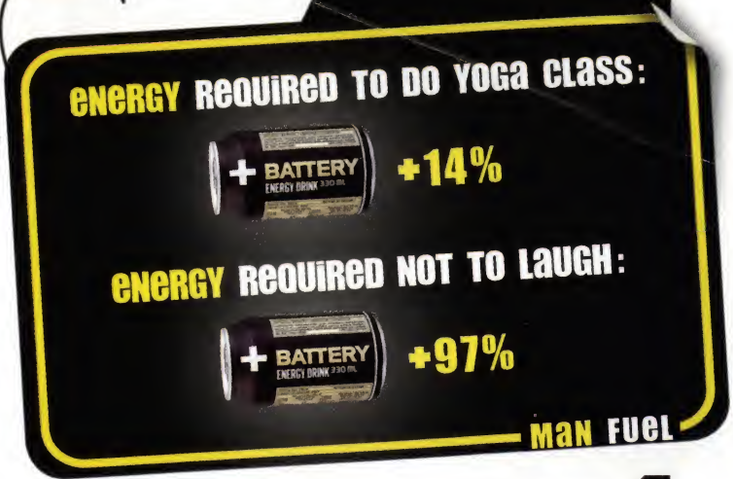
At either end of the spectrum, the overall result is the same: game designers will be able to more closely tailor their control systems to their desire; fewer constraints means more creative possibilities. And more creative possibilities, ultimately, means much better games for you and I. A good thing, don't you think?

GAME-PLAYING SURGEONS OUTGUN COLLEAGUES

In yet another wacky study, researchers have found that surgeons who, at some point, have played videogames for at least three hours per week are better at keyhole and laparoscopic surgery. These methods involve piloting remote tools through a person's pipey-like bits and pieces using only a TV screen for navigation.

Despite being common knowledge that gaming improves one's hand-eye co-ordination, the instigators of the test were still quite shocked at the findings, with one coming to the conclusion that "videogames may be a practical teaching tool to help train surgeons".

Taken with the news story a few pages earlier about games making girls horny, one may conclude that surgeons who surround themselves with games and gamer girls should save more lives AND score more totty. God really does exist. **JE**



PS3 PS2 PSP

CALLING ALL CALL OF DUTY FANS

Call of Duty 3 is what war's good for. We know this. You know this. It's a little thing we like to call "established". Thanks to the folks at Activision, you could score one of five free copies of this game, upon which you can either play it in your PlayStation 3, or frolic with it in a field of daisies… or corn.

All you need do is solve this mystery of the ages and follow the entry instructions on page 15. Mark your entry 'Call of Duty 3 giveaway'.

QUESTION: Which star of *Saving Private Ryan* was caught using a prosthetic penis to wiz out a fake urine sample?

PS3 PS2 PSP

SCORE A FREE DATE WITH TONY HAWK (KINDA)

Oh my goodness! OH. MY. GOODNESS! THE HAWK MANETH HATH RETURNETH. To celebrate the celestial coming of this beacon, this bastion of the ply board, Activision is giving away – YES – *giving* away five free copies of *Tony Hawk Project 8* for PS3.

You can score one of these freebies, but you must answer a question, and you must answer it correctly. Get your Google on and read closely, we will write it only once. Mark your entry 'Tony Hawk's Project 8 giveaway' and see page 15 for entry details.

QUESTION: What is Tony Hawk's middle name?

PS3 PS2 PSP

IT'S A SUPER DUPER SMASHING GOOD ROMP!

Ready to unleash that comic book guy within? Activision is betting you are, so we've got five copies of *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* up for grabs. You've got a tonne of heroes to choose from, go one of the Fantastic Four, or Avengers, or X-men. We're partial to your friendly neighbourhood Spider-Man. Go web, go! For a chance to win just answer the following question, mark your entry 'Marvel: Ultimate Alliance giveaway' and follow the entry details on page 15.

QUESTION: Which superhero is also known as The Thunder God?

ENERGY REQUIRED TO RUN DOWN THE BEACH:
+ BATTERY ENERGY DRINK 330 ML
+19%
ENERGY REQUIRED TO SUCK IN YOUR GUT:
+ BATTERY ENERGY DRINK 330 ML
+94%
+ BATTERY + ENERGY DRINK 330 ML
MAN FUEL

PS3 PS2 PSP

FEED YOUR NEED

Need for Speed Carbon takes the racing from the streets to the mountains, where one slip can spell certain disaster. Mess up in the canyons and you can forget about a tow truck – you're gonna need a spatula. Thanks to EA we've got 10 copies of the slick *Need for Speed Carbon* up for grabs. For a chance to win all you need do is answer the following question. See page 15 for entry instructions and mark your entry 'Need for Speed Carbon giveaway'.

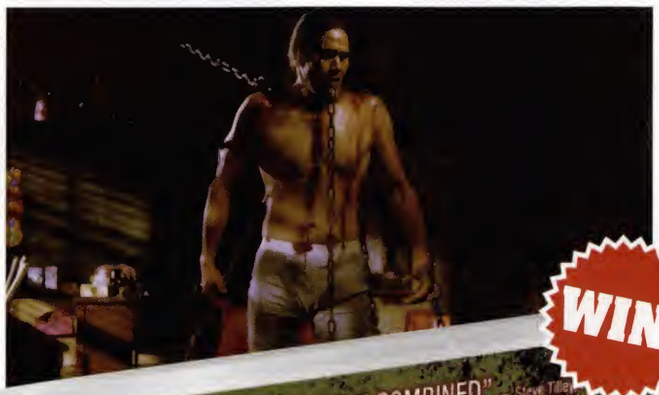
QUESTION: In 25 words or less, tell us how much you love your car.

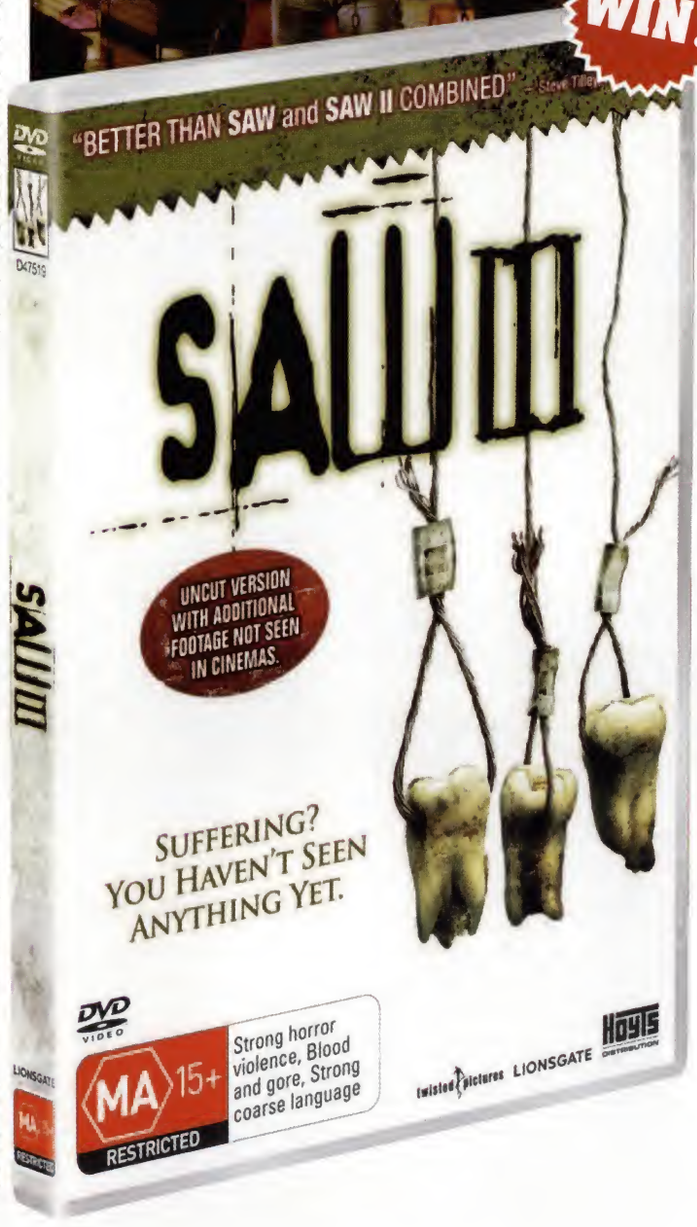
DVD GIVEAWAY

BITING CINEMA THAT CUTS TO THE BONE

Oh that Jigsaw. Will he ever lose his fascination with macabre games to dismantle and fracture both the human psyche and body? Not if Hollywood has anything to say about it! Sony Pictures has ten *Saw III* DVDs to torture, slice and dice your schlock horror collection. These films are so freaky deaky they make your eyeballs bleed. For a chance to win just answer the following question, mark your entry 'Saw III giveaway' and follow the entry details on page 15.

QUESTION: What are the names of the two Aussies who penned and directed the first *Saw*?





PS3 PS2 PSP

DIE BAD ROBOTS DIE!

Like to feel like a big man? Who doesn't? Like to tower, head and shoulders, and a couple of storeys above the rest? Sure do! Then this one's for you. Atari has come to the party with some rock 'em sock 'em robot action. We've got ten copies of *Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight* in our hot little hands to give away to ten lucky mech warriors. Think you've got the stones to handle that much action? Answer the question below and find out! See page 15 for entry instructions and mark your entries 'MSG: Target in Sight' giveaway'.

QUESTION: What other name is *Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight* known by

THE TOP TEN

Videogame characters it would suck to have a beer with.

1. Kain and/or Raziel from the *Soul Reaver* series
You just know that either of these blokes would start bitching about the other one as soon as they'd downed their first schooner. Plus they'd rattle on and on... It'd be gloomier than a Goth club on Extra Gloomy Tuesday. Seriously, Kain, Raziel? Just do it and get it over with!

2. Ghost Rider
Try getting a beer near that flaming skull. It'd melt in seconds. And then it'd be your round again! Son-of-a...

3. Sonic the Hedgehog
As his recent titles have all sucked he'd get drunk and start reminiscing about how he "used to be somebody" then launch into a dirty limerick about Jak and Daxter. Ugly.

4. Lara Croft
You just know after beer number eight the topic of "raiding her tomb" would come up and she'd deliver a swift boot to your head.

5. Rayman
Dude has no arms – can't hold his liquor. HO HO HO! Geddit? Oh God. We're sorry.

6. Prince of Persia
When it comes to his shout, he'd just rewind time so it'd always be your turn. Cheeky bugger.

7. Chimera from *Resistance: Fall of Man*
They'd be trying to "convert" you all night. "Come join our mysterious alternate historically based army," they'd hiss. Well, they would if they could talk. They'd likely just shoot you and make stuff out of your guts. Not cool, Chimera.

8. Pyramid Head from *Silent Hill*
Where's the drink go in? After breaking his fifth or sixth ale against his iron bonce he'd likely cleft you in twain with his big sword thing.

9. Any *Final Fantasy* character
Fancy "turn based drinking"? Us neither.

10. Pikachu from *Pokémon*
"The 'Chu" is a nasty drunk. He came to a party once and he started calling all the ladies "his bitches". Also – pissed on the couch. Not nice 'Chu. That couch really tied the room together.

WINNERS

From the comps in *OPS2* #63

Guitar Hero wireless guitar: S Adams, L Tadesci, C Laurence, B Daniels, J Hooper, E Nielson **God Hand:** K Laidlaw, L Nascimento, J Watt, S McLeish, M Stepanian, R McEvoy, J Gordon, F Levy, H Noble and P Price **All other winners notified by phone or email**

WIN!

PS3 PS2 PSP

SMOKE 'EM UP!

Get your motor running, head out on the highway, looking for adventure… okay, you know the rest. To be honest we were running out of driving clichés. That generous crowd at Atari have got ten copies of *Test Drive Unlimited* to put some nitrous in your tank. For a chance to win just answer to following question, mark your entry '*Test Drive Unlimited* giveaway' and follow the entry instructions on page 15.

QUESTION: What's the name of the British TV show for car enthusiasts aired on SBS on Monday nights?

WIN!

PS3 PS2 PSP

HIGHWAY TO THE DANGER ZONE

Maverick, Goose and Iceman. If you don't know (you should) they're call signs for fighter pilots immortalised in the seminal '80s classic *Top Gun*. Want to take to the skies, find some missile fodder, get a lock, and blast some iron eagles into oblivion? Now you can! Thanks to Atari we've got ten tickets to flight school in the form of *Heatseeker* on PS2. If your ego likes writing cheques your body can't cash, answer the following question for a chance to win. Mark your entry '*Heatseeker* giveaway' and see page 15 for all the entry details.

QUESTION: Finish this immortal *Top Gun* quotable quote: "I feel the need…"

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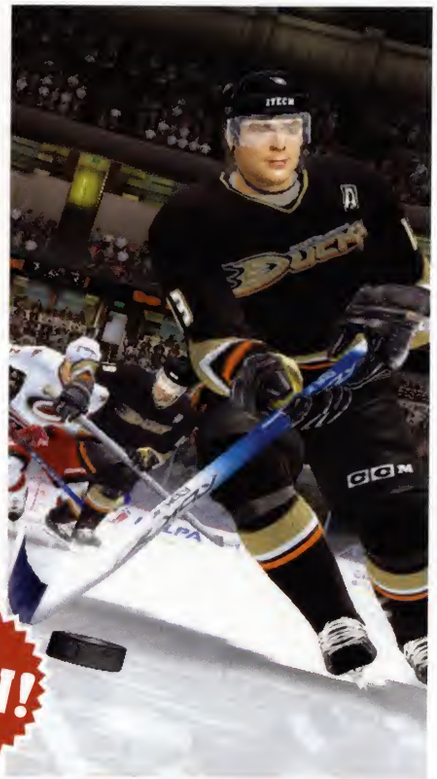
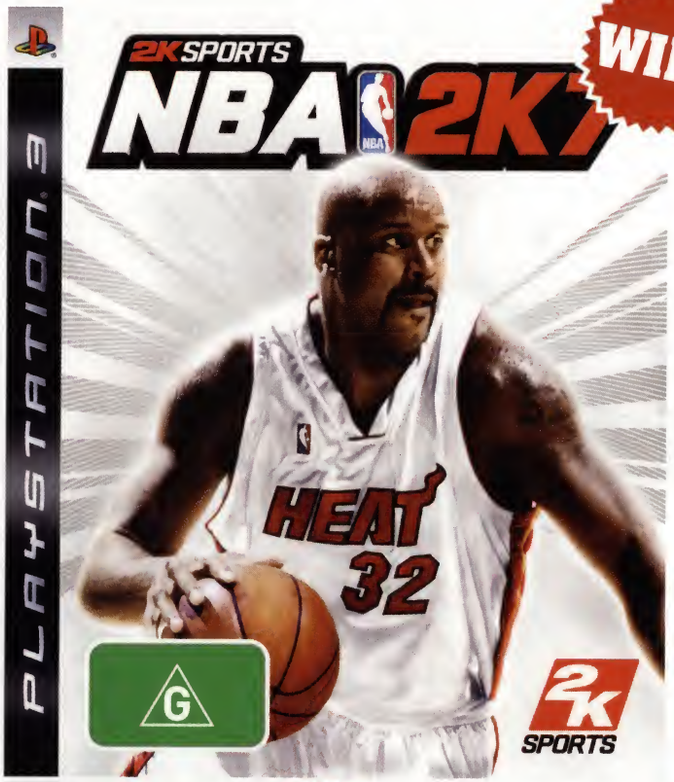
PS3 PS2 PSP

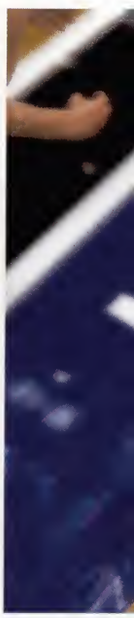
RIM ROCKING, PUCK SLAPPING FREEBIES

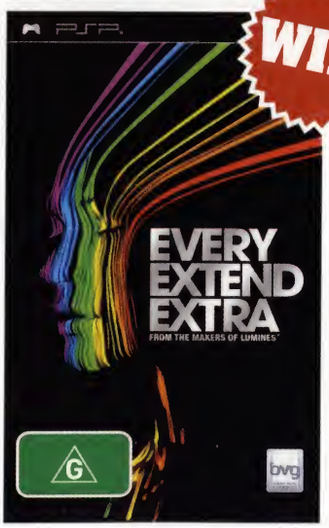


You're not a real man if you don't own a couple of Yankee doodle sports games. Not *really*. To become the ultimate stallion you'll need the 2K pair of *NBA 2K7* and *NHL 2K7*, and those fun loving guys at Take 2 are giving away 10 sets of these bad boys. (Of course, if you're a girl you should feel completely comfortable entering this competition, too. *Completely*.) But first, you must go through the famed Trial of (Wo)Man. Like in Ancient Egypt where future heroes had to defeat the wit of the Sphinx, you must now conquer our riddle. Mark your entries '2K Sports giveaway' and see page 15 for how to enter.

QUESTION: In 1994 Shaquille O'Neal appeared in which feature film?





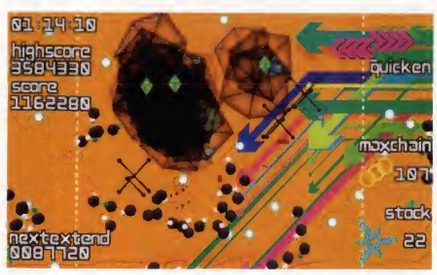


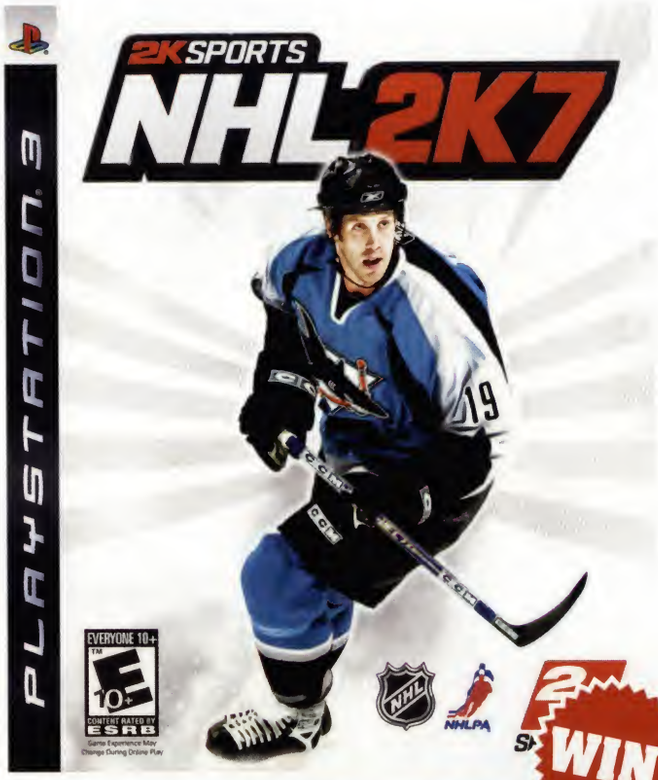
PS3 PS2 PSP

EXTRA! EXTRA! BLOW STUFF UP!

Blending unique shooter action with trippy *Rez*-style visuals, *Every Extend Extra* will test you down to the last synapse. As luck would have it, we've got 10 copies of *Every Extend Extra* to give away, once again, thanks to the fantastic people at Funtastic. To be in the running for some extended action, answer the following question, mark your entry 'Every Extend Extra giveaway' and follow the entry details on page 15.

QUESTION: What is the name of the freeware game that *Every Extend Extra* draws its inspiration from?





WIN!

PS3 PS2 PSP

WIPEOUT! TOTALLY!

PS3 will have its *WipEout*... someday.

It's official! *WipEout* will be coming to PlayStation 3. It's just unknown as to what it'll be called, and when it'll be released.

That futuristic racing game that took much effort to master corners will now support the PS3's SIXAXIS sensor, according to some recent comments made by Sony Liverpool director Clemens Wangerin.

In an interview with UK magazine *Develop*, the development director said the new title will support "SIXAXIS controls, maybe online multiplayer and downloadable content".

There are also rumours floating around of the PSP having a new *WipEout*, and with the PS3's connectivity power, who knows what tasty treats we'll get? **GW**

TOP 10 GAMES CHART

Rank	Title	Category	Distributor
4	Happy Feet	Adventure	Red Ant
5	Avatar: The Legend of Aang	Adventure	THQ
6	WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2007	Sports	THQ
7	LEGO Star Wars II	Adventure	Activision
8	SingStar Legends (bundle)	Party	Sony
9	BUZZ! Junior Jungle Party (bundle)	Party	Sony
10	Okami	Adventure	Activision

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Format	Title	Category	Distributor
APRIL			
PSP	300: March to Glory	Action	Atari
PSP	Afterburner: Black Falcon	Action	THQ
PS2	Capcom Classics Collection Vol 2	Retro	Activision
PSP	Capcom Puzzle World	Puzzle	Activision
PS2	Chicken Little: Ace in Action	Platformer	Funtastic
PSP	Death Jr 2: Root of Evil	Platformer	Atari
PSP	Diner Dash	Platformer	Atari
PSP	Dragon Ball Z Shin Budokai	Fighter	Atari
PS3	F.E.A.R.	FPS	Vivendi
PS2	God of War II	Adventure	Sony
PSP	Gunpey	Puzzle	Atari
PS2/PSP	Heatseeker	Flight	Atari
PS2/PSP	Impossible Mission	Puzzle/Platformer	Funtastic
PS2/PSP	Legend of the Dragon	Adventure	Funtastic
PSP	Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	Stealth/Action	Atari
PS3	Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight	Action	Atari
PSP	Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	Platformer	Sony
PS2/PSP	Test Drive Unlimited	Racing	Atari
PS2	The Red Star	Action	Take 2
PSP	Zendoku	Puzzle	Atari
MAY			
PS2	BUZZ! The Mega Quiz	Party	Sony
PSP	Coded Arms Contagion	FPS	Atari
PS2	Everybody's Tennis	Sports	Sony
PSP	Marvel Trading Card Game	Strategy	Atari
PS3/PS2/PSP	Pirates of the Caribbean 3	Adventure	Funtastic
PS2	Rogue Galaxy	RPG	Sony
PS2	SingStar Pop Hits	Party	Sony
PS2	SOCOM Combined Assault	Shooter	Sony
PSP	SOCOM Fireteam Bravo II	Shooter	Sony
PS3	Saints Row	Adventure	THQ
PS3/PS2	Spider-Man 3	Action	Activision
PS2/PSP	Tomb Raider: 10th Anniversary	Adventure	Atari
PS2	Xiaolin Showdown	Action	Atari
JUNE			
PS3	Burnout 5	Racing	EA
PS2/PSP	Emergency Mayhem	Action	Atari
PSP	Hot PXL	Mini-game	Atari
PS2	Real World Golf 2007	Sports	Funtastic
PS2/PSP	Shrek the Third	Adventure	Activision

LETTERS

LETTER OF THE MONTH

PS2 POWERS ON

Dear OPS,
It's nice to know that even though the PS3 has arrived with all of these über games that are sure to impress us all, they are still bringing out releases like *Okami*, *Final Fantasy XII* and other amazing games for the PS2. Really, I'm happy that we don't overlook quality games on the PS2, and just go for ones promising shiny graphics, but below par game experience on PS3. For a while I was worried that *Okami* was never going to be released in Australia, but it seems that someone is watching over us especially now that I've seen *Resistance: Fall of Man* and *Metal Gear Solid 4*. Yep, most definitely. Anyway, great job on the new-look mag, and enjoy the picture of Amaterasu I drew and inked!
Samantha Howarth, via email

Great work on the picture, Samantha. And you're totally right about the PS2 – there are plenty of great experiences to come for the old girl. Okami *and* Final Fantasy XII *are out already and the astonishingly good* God of War II *is about to drop, with the likes of* Burnout Dominator, Tomb Raider: Anniversary *and* Manhunt 2 *all on the way in the coming months. But we need to assure you that the PS3 isn't sacrificing gameplay in favour of graphical grunt. Sure, they aren't all instant classics in the PS3 launch line-up, but* Resistance, MotorStorm, Oblivion *and each of Ubisoft's* Tom Clancy *titles are absolute must-play experiences, to name a few. We guess the bottom line is that between the PS2, PS3 and PSP, Sony really has got all your gaming needs covered. And yet the Australian Bureau of Statistics continues to ignore 'PlayStation' when we write it as our chosen religion on the census, while 'witchcraft' and 'scientology' are apparently completely acceptable. Honestly, how do you statistics geeks sleep at night?*

WINNER!

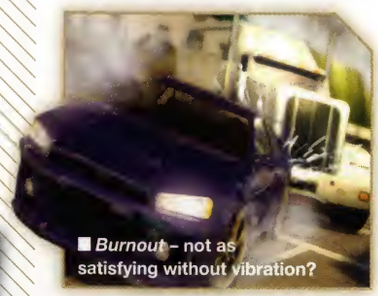
Letter of the month wins a copy of the brilliant *MotorStorm* thanks to Sony!

DEFINITIVE DEFINITION

I've been looking at the PlayStation 3 for a while now and I really want to get it. But it seems that the two big updates and things to happen to the PS3 are its HDTV capability and its enhancement in online capability. My problem is that I don't have a high definition TV and I don't know how to run the online feature. So my question is, will the PS3 look any better than the PS2 on a standard definition TV and what exactly do I have to do to set up online capabilities? I have broadband already.
Matt Jones, Vic

■ HD – the best way to view your PS3

If you've got broadband already, then all you need to do is plug your Ethernet cable directly into the port on the back of the PS3. It's as simple as that. If you don't want to run unsightly cables through your lounge room, you could also try a wireless router, which the PS3 can connect to right out of the box. As for the question of televisions, you really aren't getting the most out of your new console unless you have an HD display that can handle at least 720p resolution. Having said that, the PS3 still looks incredible on a standard definition set – but with the prices of LCD televisions getting cheaper all the time, you really should consider an upgrade in the near future.


■ *Burnout* – not as satisfying without vibration?

BAD VIBES

I know you guys have said that the lack of vibration in the PS3 controller isn't a problem, but I just can't imagine *Burnout* without it. The blistering graphics, awe inspiring sound and cool new SIXAXIS motion-sensing might be there, but I'm going to feel weak and feeble in my meaty chunk of metal if I don't FEEL the slam as I smash my brother into a pole and twist him into an unrecognisable mess. I don't see the reasoning behind the removal of the function, was it wearing down on the controller and slowly breaking them? Was there a lack of room in the controller with the new features? I just don't get why they would remove it, it's like living through life with under a constant anaesthetic!
Liam Shanahan, Vic

According to the new girl in admin, if it weren't for vibrations – she wouldn't even have a sex life! Bet she really regrets accidentally copying in every internal address in on that email! She can't walk from one end of the office to the other without someone humming a brrrrrrrrrrrr-ing sound and high-fiving the person next to them. Ah, Dave-o – you totally ARE the office king of comedy. Wait, what were we talking about? Ah yes – to be honest, Liam, we really haven't noticed the lack of vibration during our time with the PS3. Straight up. However, we can appreciate that it can be a fairly vital part of certain games, like Burnout *or even the lock-picking mechanic in the* Splinter Cell *games for example. Here's hoping that Sony teams up with peripheral maker SplitFish and makes use of the latter's rumble technology, which enables vibration without the use of moving parts which may interfere with the motion-sensing components. However, Sony hasn't confirmed any plans to work with SplitFish at the time of writing.*

FREAK OF THE MONTH

■ "I am not an animal! I'm an *OPS* reader!"

Big kisses to Jessica (nice rack). Yeah I know Raiden got the heels and the look! I'm wondering about having a 'hero' who's got the balls! Girl characters have miles of (head hair?). What's the issue about underarm hair on dudes? Not that I've got an armpit fetish but can it be that hard?
David Moirr, via email

Tourette's syndrome is a serious neurological disorder that affects nearly one in a hundred people around the world. We were at the movies once and a group of people in the front row were loudly swearing at the screen, offending the rest of the audience. They didn't actually have Tourette's, Big Momma's House *was just a really awful movie. As for you David, well we don't think you've got Tourette's either – you're just nuts.*

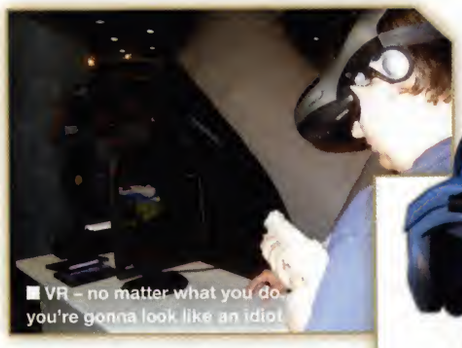
CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

VIRTUAL INSANITY

How far can developers go? Remember the 1970s (I'm showing my age now) when the Atari was all the rage? The arcade games like *Space Invaders* were the best things since sliced bread. Then along came computer games. I owned a Commodore 64 back then and used to program my own games. They were basic, simple games but still the forerunner to today's games. I have always been fascinated and in awe of the graphics of the various game platforms that have emerged over the years and if they have a terrific storyline to go with it, even better. Having played PS1 and PS2 games, I find it incredible as to how realistic the graphics are becoming – or have become. With the release of PS3 nearly on us, the graphics are even better again, so I have read. How far can they take it – imagine, in the not too distant future, 'Virtual Reality' games. Where you wear a headset and actually go into the game yourself and become the hero or villain. I hope this idea is already in development. I will volunteer to be the first to test it out

Bronte Smith, ACT



■ VR – no matter what you do you're gonna look like an idiot

You clearly remember the '70s, but have you completely forgotten about the '90s? Can't you recall those VR games that dominated the arcades in the early part of the decade? We still have these reoccurring neck pains as a result of the sheer weight of those big, goofy headsets. Since then, VR has disappeared off the face of the Earth, at least in terms of the videogame industry. The technology is still used around the world for military training and engineering purposes, but gaming still seems a couple of generations away from re-embracing VR (perhaps Nintendo's catastrophic Virtual Boy is still too fresh in the industry's memory). Interestingly enough, Sony acquired a patent in 2005 for the idea of the non-invasive beaming of different frequencies and patterns of ultrasonic waves directly into the brain in order to recreate the five senses. But that sounds a bit too much like The Matrix *to us, so we think we'll stick with our HD display and surround sound for the time being.*

■ *GTA* – parents? Please, it's just not meant for your kids

GTA, GO AWAY?

I am writing to comment about games like *Grand Theft Auto*. Now don't get me wrong, as a 12 year-old I understand that the world is full of sex, drugs and swearing, and I can understand that you can't hide from this, however I am angry about the violence in the games. There is a whole world of violence in real life, but a whole generation of 11-16 year olds are being subjected to playing a game of killing hookers and running people over with ambulances. Basically my question is why do you think this game is so great? And the ratings aren't helping, almost every friend I have that has a PS2 has a *GTA* game. I advise you to stop recommending games like this.

Aidan Maizels, Vic

We're glad you're not keen on the GTA *games, Aidan, because as a 12 year-old you really shouldn't be exposed to them anyway, and nor should your friends. All of the* GTA *games have been rated MA15+ for a reason, and it's a shame that the parents of your friends are seemingly turning a blind eye to that fact. "Why do we think the* GTA *games are so great?" There are many reasons – for their humour, for their style, for the freedom they provide the player and the diversity of gameplay experiences that Rockstar packs into each individual game. Sure, violence in the real world is a very bad thing – we totally agree – but as rational thinking adults we're able to distinguish between reality and virtual reality. Now forget about* GTA *for the time being and get some* Guitar Hero *into your life.*

PS3 4 EVA?

Is the premium PS3 going to be out forever? I need to know because I won't have saved up enough money at launch.

Reuben Bender, via email

The premium 60GB PS3 console is by no means a 'limited edition' product, and should most certainly be on sale for the entire duration of the PS3's life cycle. The only PS3 that will last literally "forever" will be God's PS3 – as it will exist in heaven outside the constraints of space and time (seriously, the Lord is crazy for MotorStorm *– we read it on his MySpace blog).*

JUST ACE

Is *Ace Combat* being developed for the PS3?

Kyle Black, via email

It would certainly make sense given how good it feels to fly the aircraft in Warhawk *using the motion-sensing SIXAXIS controller, but Namco is yet to announce any plans for its* Ace Combat *series on PS3. You'd have to say it's pretty inevitable though, given the series' history with the PlayStation brand.*

EMPTY THREAT

I've got nothing to say really. I just want to get into the 'Cuttings' section of your mag. If you don't put me in, I'll go and buy an Xbox 360! I swear, I'll do it! *not really*

Mark Fox, NSW

*Quick, do what he says guys – otherwise he's going to buy an Xb—Damn it! We fell for it! Wow, you really got us there, Mark. Just for that we're gonna send you the Game of the Month! *not really**

SPEAK TO US

Love the new mag? Hate the new mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on *anything* that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au

INSIDE GAMING

THIS MONTH TRISTAN RAPS WITH DARTH VADER

[Heavy breathing on the other end of the phone]

Tristan: Look, who is this? How did you get this number? What are you, some kind of freak? Do you get off by calling guys like me and not talking? Say something, you scumbag!

Darth Vader: This is Lord Vader, and YOU called ME for an interview! I oughtta Force-choke you for being so insolent! You remind me of my whiney little bitch of a son. "Noooo, it's not true!" You know what else isn't true, Luke? Your alleged heterosexuality.

Tristan: Oookay. I'm sensing some father-son issues here…

Vader: Well, I mean you do your best to slaughter all the Jedi and takeover the galaxy – and for what? The only people I've got to continue the Skywalker name are a limp-wristed farm boy and a princess with bad hair. Lousy kids. I'd make some better ones except I've got a robot wang now. It's impossible for me to reproduce – although this thing is pretty sweet; it's got three speeds! I can beat eggs with it!

Tristan: And I thought that humming was coming from your lightsaber. So I guess this is why you got yourself an apprentice for *The Force Unleashed*?

Vader: Yep. I got the idea from my buddy, Donald Trump. We play golf together every Tuesday. Anyway I auditioned several applicants before I settled on the final apprentice. I even adopted Trump's catchphrase, "You're fired", which I would say right before I Force-hurled their incompetent asses down the Death Star incinerator.

Tristan: Cute.

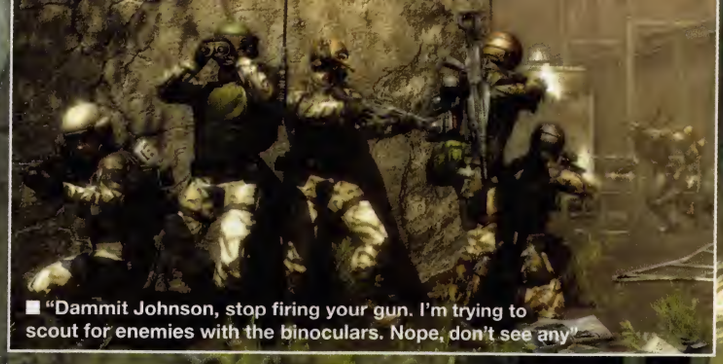
Vader: Yeah – Palpatine got a kick out of it. He laughed so hard he wet his robes! Although, he *always* wets his robes – he's getting pretty old, you know. You can't control a 90 year old bladder, even with the Force.

Tristan: Let's leave it there. I think I need to go and Force-throw up.

PS3 PS2 PSP

PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** SHOOTER
- **PLAYERS:** 1-16
- **RELEASE:** LATE 2007
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
- **DEVELOPER:** Z-AXIS
- **WEB:** enemyterritory.com



■ "Dammit Johnson, stop firing your gun. I'm trying to scout for enemies with the binoculars. Nope, don't see any"

■ "...Frank? You okay? Damn, should have packed a medkit instead of the extra sandwiche

ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

The game that will own you

■ "Okay men, charge through the trenches. I've got the last ten minutes of *Heroes* to watch"

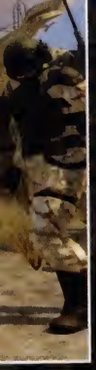
"GO BACK TO WHORE ISLAND?!" you spit as you hammer lead into a pair of cut off Strogg who've pushed too hard, too soon into your territory – GDF territory. With two of their soldiers down you lunge into an ascending GDF Bumblebee along with a soldier and field ops specialist. You man the side turret and pepper a Strogg Hornet aircraft, diverting its attention as a GDF soldier tags it with a missile from below. As you get over your target, a silo that needs to be eradicated with high explosives, both you and the field ops specialist leap out of the Bumblebee, pull your 'chutes and rain hellfire on a pinned down grunt below.

Voices crackle over your headset as you touch down. You weave around and meet a pack of dusty and bloodied GDF. A medic is hunched over one of them as he tries to revive him with his defibrillators. The panting cracks along over your headset as a Strogg Goliath bi-pedal tank lurches around a corner ahead and spots you and your crew, heads together, guns down. It fires its canons. And you all die. Blown to kingdom come. Blown to hell. Before your mulch flaps to the ground, you respawn in mid-air, behind scurrying GDF as they flee the Goliath. As your 'chute takes you to ground you spot a deserted Titan tank in a close by nook – the sort of tank that loves to go mano-e-mano with a Goliath, the sort of tank that has your name all over it.

This is *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*, bitches. And you better believe it's the game set to rocket online multiplayer shooters closer to the perfect nirvana-like mash of sports and war. Despite the PS3 port only just being announced, it's easily our hot, hot tip for the must-have online game of the next couple of years. And folks, we've never been wrong (shines nails...).

LOVE THE SMELL OF NAPALM?

Barebones team deathmatch this ain't. Unlike the majority of console shooters where everyone piss farts around an arena looking for the BFG, hoping to die less than everyone else, this is a class and objective-based affair that requires different team members to



■ "Wait, did you say north is the arrow pointing up on the map? Oh yeah, we're totally lost"

■ "They were right about what war's like. I am seeing red"

undertake vastly different roles. Sound complicated? It's not. Once you get the hang of it you'll be able to gargle brewskies and star for your team without any trouble.

It rolls like this: each map has a series of offensive objectives one side must complete while the other side must hold out on defense for a set period. One map, for instance, might see your team have to construct a bridge to progress on into the next guarded area then, once that's out of the way, you'll have to infiltrate a building and blow a "well massive" structure up to progress to the third area – and so on. All the while your team is constantly relaying information over your headset or on-screen about where the enemies are, what they're doing, what vehicles are hovering about, how to break into your girlfriend's email – you name it.

OBJECTIVES OF AFFECTION

Knocking these objectives down requires specialist abilities from your lads, and it's here the different classes come into their own. Without getting bogged down in detail, both teams have five classes available to them with each able to access different weapon load outs and battlefield abilities.

When members of you team aren't scratching their trigger fingers, they'll be out to deal tough love using one of the many vehicles *ET:QW* entertains on its massive battlescapes. Ranging from hulking and powerful to nippy and strong, they can turn the tide of any shootout, and subsequently the match. The Strogg don't have quite as many vehicles as the GDF, but that's because

■ "Are you sure the girls know there's a party in your cockpit?"

■ "WAIT! I promised myself I'd never get stabbed from behind"

HEAD OF THE CLASS

Our call for the coolest troops thus far has to go to the field ops and Strogg oppressor classes. Unlike the engineer who has a defensive deployable to automatically take out ground or air forces, the field ops and oppressor class set up offensive deployables that must be fired manually. In other words as a field ops trooper you could mosey up a hill, park your keister out of harm's way, call in a big-ass Hammer Missile launcher, then fire it off to obliterate bunkered down Strogg hundreds of metres away.

■ "Damn I'm good. I'm covering the hell out of this street!" "Uh, sir, I think there's a chance they out-flanked us"

■ "Keit-bonk, make sure you capture one alive so our brothers back home can laugh at their puny human ding dongs"

"...easily our hot, hot tip for the must-have online game of the next couple of years"

as technologically superior aliens their wheels come with more whiz-bang extras, primarily on the butt-ugly but tough-as-hell side of things. On the other hand, the GDF's array of vehicles is broader and more manoeuvrable, featuring two aircraft, a number of ground assault transports, and even an amphibious craft. The only exception to this rule is the Strogg Icarus – a jetpack that allows Strogg to superman it over buildings and land with their boot up GDF ass.

BRIGHT ID

For all the aforementioned fancy shmancy, the real guarantee that *ET:QW* is going to make everyone cop a tele tan is because it's an id game, despite Z-Axis handling the PS3 port. After some sterling releases of late, including *Doom III* and *Quake IV*, it's apparent id has not lost its touch. Neither, apparently, has old fox John Carmack. The granddaddy of the FPS has brought a new tool along to make sure *ET:QW* will look as good as it'll no doubt play. It's called Megatexture technology, a graphical tool Carmack probably thought up when he was on a bus or on the can... or something. We're only writing geeks so we can't really explain the boring nitty gritty, but from what we can tell it'll allow every swab of terrain to be unique (as opposed to repeated tiles), for a draw distance that knows no bounds or fog, and for compression so efficient we can expect inch-level detail within the game worlds. It's going to look bosom-like.

To top it off, id knows its crap when it comes to net code and will no doubt be ensuring Z-Axis gets it right. Lag problems, dropouts – such problems may plague lesser projects, but as id has forever been at the helm of online gaming we're guessing it's got its fingers firmly on the pulse. Vitally, id's promised its engine will sharpen up firefights on foot with "what you shoot being what you hit".

YOU KNOW YOU WANT IT

At this stage of the game the only thing that can stop *ET:QW* from taking over our lives is the Apocalypse – you know, locusts, a nuclear winter, and an epoch's full of weird evil crap going down. We're telling you now, people, *ET:QW* is the sort of gold that'll see you become indoor recluses while you lose all interest in the outside world. The sort of thing you don't want anything to do with around statistics exams, working hours, or when you're trying to accomplish something in life. Like it or not, this will rock you. **James Ellis**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Will deliver the ultimate team-and-objective-based multiplayer experience"

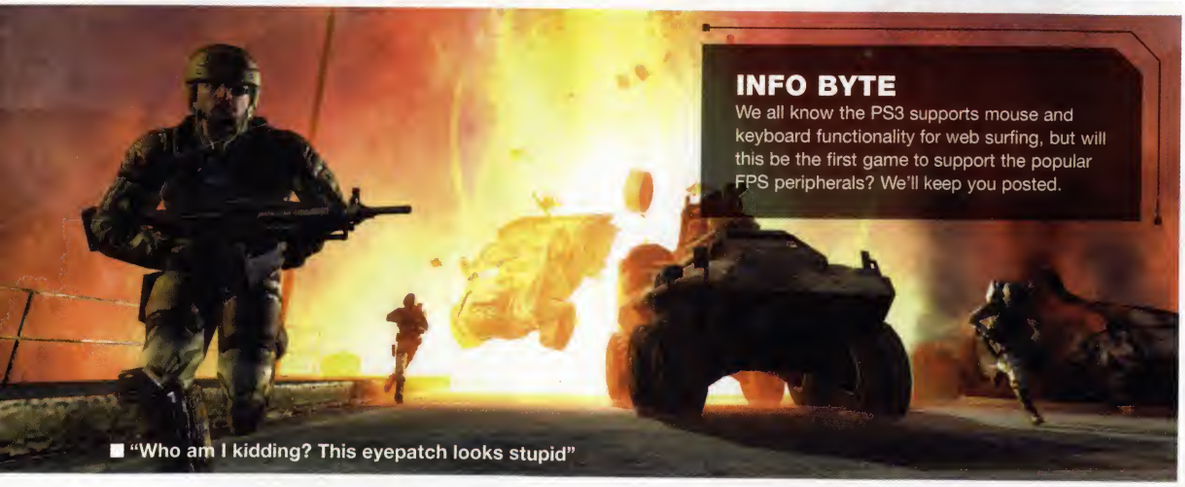
WHAT WE SAY:

■ *Quake Wars* will be better than sex. There. We said it. We just hope our girlfriends didn't hear us.

■ "Remember men, we've got to protect the intel in that Humvee at all costs"

■ "My thermal underwear G-string really isn't helping"

■ "Is it dusk or dawn? I'm too drunk to remember"



■ "Who am I kidding? This eyepatch looks stupid"

INFO BYTE

We all know the PS3 supports mouse and keyboard functionality for web surfing, but will this be the first game to support the popular FPS peripherals? We'll keep you posted.

DOGS OF WAR

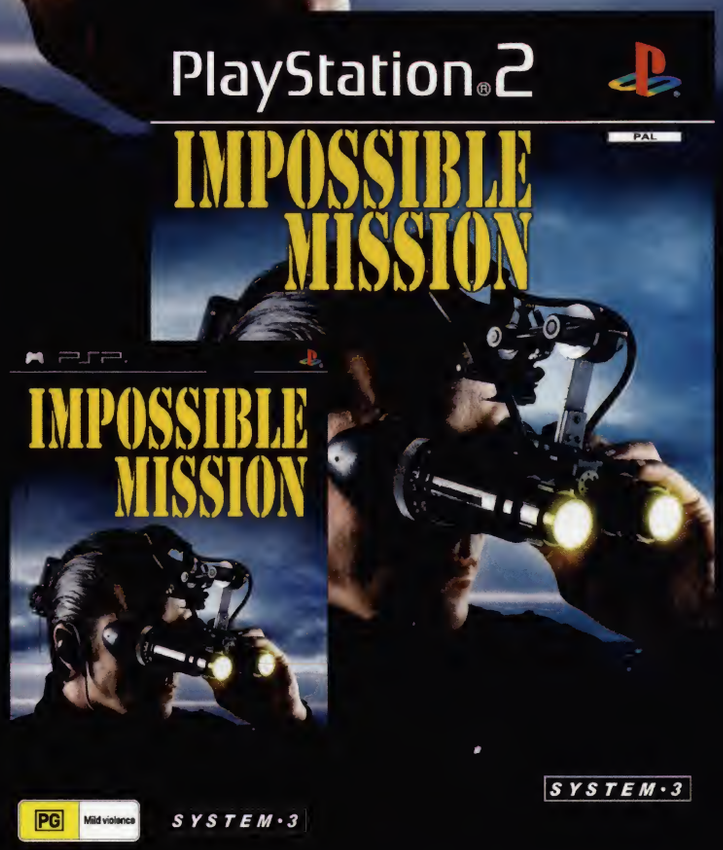
Ever wanted to bomb the hell out of a pesky sniper that keeps plugging you between the eyes? Now you can. Each side has access to a number of aerial vehicles that pack a massive punch from the air as well possess the ability to zip a bunch of troops around the battlefield. Like something out of a 'Nam game, each aerial transport also posses side gunner seats for some mid-air lead swapping. And if your ride gets too badly hit and starts a dive bomb to the ground, you can always parachute out. Damn that's money!

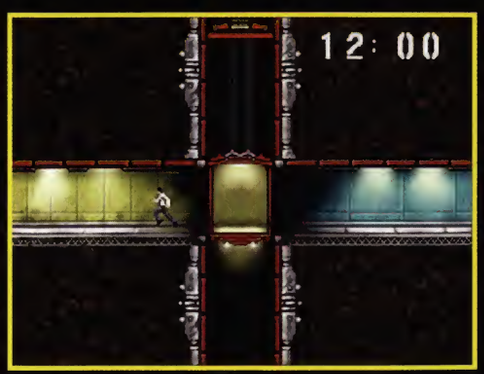
IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

AVAILABLE FROM APRIL!

THE MISSION SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT

You are Special Agent 4125 and you must undertake the most desperate of missions - saving the world from Elvin Atombender's evil plot to destroy it! The pressure is on! You have 6 hours, of real time, in which to thoroughly search all the rooms, locate 36 puzzle pieces and then use them to crack the code to defeat Elvin.





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PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **RELEASE:** MAY 2007
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
- **DEVELOPER:** TREYARCH
- **WEB:** www.treyarch.com

SPIDER-MAN 3

Spider-Man, Spider-Man...

The *Spider-Man* movie franchise and the PlayStation brand surprisingly have a lot in common. Both lord it over their competition and dominate in their prospective markets, both are just about to launch their third iteration, and both are using almost the exact same slick, ice-cool font in their title to do so. Honestly, look at pics of the PS3 and ads for the new movie, the font is almost exactly the same!

With so much in common it seems almost inevitable that the latest game in the series, *Spider-Man 3*, would wind up on the PlayStation 3. With what is usually one of the better licensed super hero titles, good old Spidey is getting latexed up once more, finally going next gen with some new tricks, a bit of a facelift, and a completely revamped fighting system.

BACK IN BLACK

If you've seen the awesome new trailer for *Spider-Man 3* then you might have noticed Spider-Man getting all funky on the mic with his all new black supersuit. Thankfully the black suit also appears in the game, and seems to play an important role in the balance of gameplay. Basically, when donning the black suit, Spider-Man's abilities become magnified; strength, agility and durability all increase. The longer this suit is worn, however, the more difficult Spidey is to control, and this dynamic promises to be one of the most interesting aspects of *Spider-Man 3*, tying in nicely with many of the anticipated plot lines of the upcoming movie.

Both the new black outfit, and the more traditional red number have combat moves specific to each suit, helping to further distinguish between the two, making the change more than merely cosmetic. In addition, the entire combat system has not only been revamped, but completely rebuilt from the ground up, with all new animations, unique combos and finishers. Manoeuvres, just as in previous *Spider-Man* titles, range from ground to air attacks. Taking down the bad guys is now more fluid and exciting than ever before.

SPIDEY IN THE SANDBOX

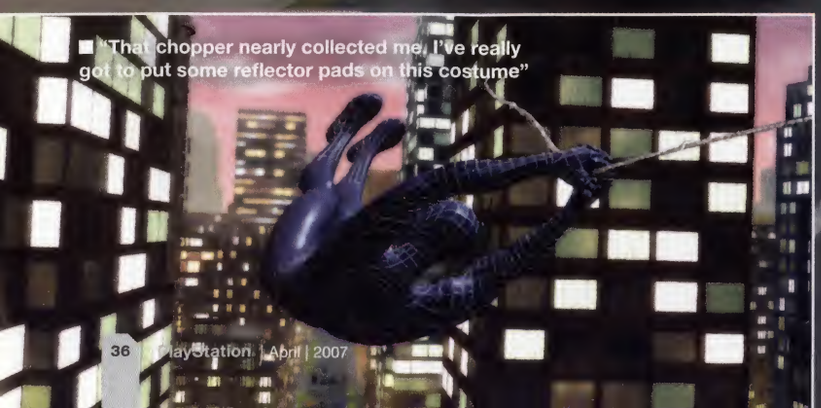
Although the sandbox genre has become steadily overcrowded as of late, *Spider-Man 3* looks set to push the genre a step forward in a huge free roaming depiction of New York, allowing players to decide for themselves whether to follow the set storylines, or just have fun messing around as Spider-Man. Working much like *Grand Theft Auto*, *Spider-Man 3* offers a more free roaming experience, although this time around you'll be fighting crime as opposed to contributing towards it. More interestingly Activision has hinted at a number of alternate plotlines that the player can follow through if they so desire. It seems that developer Treyarch has attempted to bring some depth into the *Spider-Man* franchise, creating what could possibly be a more rounded gaming experience as a result.

But it's not only the storylines which are well-developed and in-depth. The city itself spans from the rooftops, to the streets, all the way down to the dank and dirty sewers of New York City. This will hopefully be indicative of the level of detail in the Spider-Man universe. Whilst most sandbox games operate solely at ground level, *Spider-Man*'s creation of a truly three-dimensional gaming space could turn out to be its trump card. In *Spider-Man 3* you will be scaling the rooftops, traversing the sewers, and patrolling the streets, proving once and for all that crime, and gaming, isn't exclusive to ground level shenanigans.

GANGS OF NEW YORK

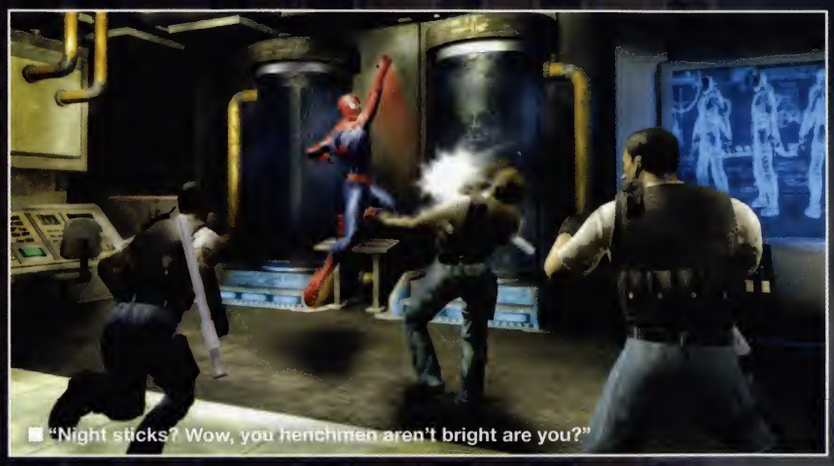
Spider-Man 3 looks set to take another leaf out of *Grand Theft Auto*'s book by introducing the concept of 'gangs' to the Spidey gaming universe. Featuring three distinct and separate gangs, the game hints at an interactive city that actually reacts to the level of crime in specific areas. Gangs are spread throughout the five boroughs of New York; if Spider-Man helps fight crime in a certain area, then the city can return to normal. If not, chaos will reign (clearly inspired by the same feature in *True Crime: NYC*).

■ "No one calls Marty McFly chicken!"



■ "That chopper nearly collected me, I've really got to put some reflector pads on this costume"

■ THWACK! "You should have jumped years ago. Loser!"



■ "Night sticks? Wow, you henchmen aren't bright are you?"

■ "I can't believe you fell for the untied shoelace line. Your shoes are velcro. You're such an idiot."

Hopefully this concept will fulfil its potential, and represent a step forward in creating a true interactive city.

In addition to the gangs, the super villains, of course, make a welcome appearance with their insane scheming and quests to rule the world. While not much is known about the major bad guys of the piece, Activision has promised that in addition to the main characters from the movie (we're thinking 'Sandman', the 'Hobgoblin' and possibly 'Venom') there will be a plethora of villains from the extensive *Spider-Man* universe.

Although details are thin on the ground, *Spider-Man 3* does sound like it could be one of the best movie tie-ins to date. Details regarding the dual-suit dynamic and the interactive city are especially tantalising, and it will be interesting to see if Activision and Treyarch deliver on the game's early promise. The *Spider-Man* franchise has always been a high quality product in terms of both movies and the subsequent videogames; as such it's hard to see *Spider-Man 3* being anything but an extremely high quality product. **Mark Serrels**

INFO BYTE

Spider-Man is a videogame veteran. He's been in the classic 2D fighting franchise *Marvel Vs Capcom*, and even brushed up on his skating skills in *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*.

■ "Check it out. I'm web-slinging without hands"

■ Slingshotting yourself off speeding vehicles? Damn we wanna play this game bad

"Details regarding the dual-suit dynamic and the interactive city are especially tantalising"

With all the hysteria surrounding both the upcoming *Spider-Man 3* movie and videogame, we thought it was the perfect time to ask Treyarch Senior Producer Greg John to swing by the office and answer some questions about the webhead.

OPS: Is *Spider-Man 3* an evolution of the *Spider-Man 2* game or does it take a completely new approach?

GJ: *Spider-Man 3* is revolutionary in many aspects, but we made sure to preserve the coolest elements of *Spider-Man 2*. We looked at every aspect of *Spider-Man 2* and asked ourselves how to make everything more intense and immersive. We made the city look gorgeous on the new platforms and we amped up the gameplay to be more cinematic and engaging. One of the most revolutionary components is the new combat system that is faster, more intense and way over the top. Did I forget to mention black suit?

OPS: How does the black symbiot suit affect the gameplay?

GJ: To make a solid base, we started off making the red-suited Spider-Man experience awesome; then, amped everything up: more hit points and a completely unique set of more powerful combat moves. Fans have been clamoring for black-suited Spider-Man for a long time, so we knew we had to do it right. We also designed specific missions for each character that played to their respective abilities. This will be the first time players can play as two totally different Spideys in one game.

OPS: How much closer have you been able to work, tech wise, with the movie team now that you have next gen hardware to create the game with?

GJ: This is the third movie game we've made with Sony/Columbia and Sam Raimi, so we've built up a close relationship. They've been very helpful with reference material and guidance, so we've been able to make this game look and feel like the movie experience. In particular, the assets from the movie can be more faithfully replicated in next gen.

OPS: Assuming the open-city gameplay returns, how have the side-missions evolved in *Spidey 3*?

GJ: The question we asked ourselves about every single mission in *Spider-Man 3* was, "What makes this special?" We took painstaking steps to ensure that each and every mission had a different feel and flavor. Each mission had to be a fully developed experience that immersed the player into being Spider-Man. The missions are now very rich and extensive – far bigger than the *SM2* missions. The city is no longer just a backdrop to a great swing system that had to be populated, but a fundamental setting to some of the most amazing and elaborate missions we've ever created.

OPS: Is there anything you can tell us about how Venom and Sandman will feature in the gameplay?

GJ: We've crafted some amazing missions that very much adhere to what Spider-Man does in the movie. The two villains are so rich in gameplay potential, that it was a joy to design the missions to really blow the player away.

OPS: Will there be other classic Spidey villains as well as Venom, Sandman and Green Goblin from the film?

GJ: As with all our Spider-Man movie games we expand the gameplay well beyond the 2-hour movie experience. I think the player will be really excited about the set of villains in our game. There are 10 storylines in total – more than any other Spider-Man game we've done. We made sure each mission was distinct and unique and each storyline has its own flavor and feel. Some of the storylines even weave together to create a bigger over-arching

■ Having your lower vertebrae turned into a thick paste? At least as painful as it sounds

■ "And they said my salsa dancing lessons were a waste..."

storyline just like real life – okay... real Spider-Man life.

OPS: Has Sam Raimi had any involvement with the project?

GJ: He's been very helpful making sure the game is truly linked in look, feel, and spirit. His guidance has been invaluable.

OPS: How does the development of *Spider-Man* games based on films differ to original titles like *Ultimate Spider-Man*? Which do you prefer working on?

GJ: We learned a lot from *Ultimate Spider-Man* as well as *Spider-Man 2* and all the other *Spider-Man* games. Both original titles and movie games have allowed us to grow as game developers. Each experience has helped us make *Spider-Man 3* a unique, intense, and cinematic experience.

OPS: When you sat down to plan the game, what was the one thing you were most determined to achieve with *Spider-Man 3*?

GJ: We spent a lot of time researching, listening, and prototyping all aspects of the game. We considered what the consumers and reviewers said, and we came up with a lot of new and exciting ideas that we then incorporated in with what made the previous games already great. For example, we polished up the great swing system, but we totally revamped the combat system.

OPS: Is there any new tech that has a big impact on the gameplay, like destructible environments, etc.?

GJ: With the new tech we knew we could make the graphics look breathtaking, but we made sure to use a lot of the new memory and power to put more enemies (a LOT more) on the screen and make those enemies smarter. The new combat system benefited immensely from the new tech since we were able to create more combat moves and make them more elaborate. The player will get to play the most cinematic boss fights ever.

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Allows players to experience the actions of Spider-Man and his darker, more mysterious black-suited persona."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Details are sparse, but with the dynamic between the black and red Spidey suits *Spider-Man 3* is bursting with promise.

■ "That's right ladies, I put the 'GRRR' in swinger"

SPIDER-MAN BRINGS THE FUNK

The music for the original *Spider-Man* is possibly one of the catchiest songs of all time, so catchy in fact that the song has been covered by bands such as The Ramones, Aerosmith, Michael Bublé and Tenacious D. The musical connection, however, does not stop there; even rappers have name checked Spider-Man. Most memorably Method Man claimed that he was "swinging through town like your neighbourhood Spider-Man" in the Wu-Tang classic 'Protect Ya Neck', and more recently Jay Z claimed to "climb the charts" just like Peter Parker. That's right people; Spidey is 'gangsta', and could pop a cap in yo ass any time he damn well pleases.

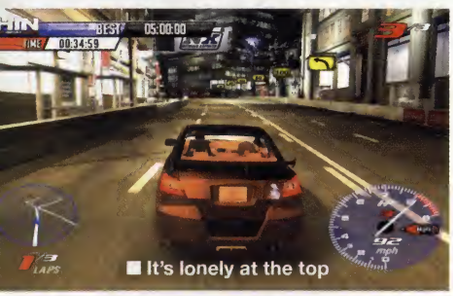
- **GENRE:** RACING
- **PLAYERS:** TBA
- **RELEASE:** TBA
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
- **DEVELOPER:** JUICE GAMES
- **WEB:** www.juicegames.com

■ A strip-club track? Genius!

INFO BYTE

The original *Juiced* was first under development as *Lamborghini* at Rage Software. It died when Rage collapsed. Juice Games was formed from the ashes of Rage's Warrington studio.

■ Developer Tips 101: If your screenshots don't look fast enough just use Photoshop to blur the cars



■ It's lonely at the top

■ "Damn, I hate turning up in the same colour car"

■ Driver cam – just as pointless as it sounds

JUICED 2

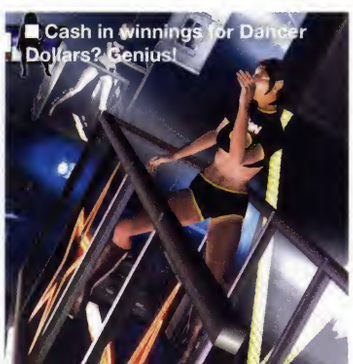
Can it squeeze past the opposition?

Remember five years back when you couldn't throw a dart into a store without hitting a snowboarding game? The best of them have hung about, the odd release trickling out every now and then, but the vast majority of them either dried up or melted away.

What does this have to do with *Juiced 2*, you ask? Well, like snowboarding before it, street racing burst onto the big stage a couple of years ago with all the impudence of a 13-year-old in baggy pants. We know street racing has been around since streets were invented but it took Paul Walker's attempts to prove to everyone he was an actor in *The Fast and the Furious* to put it in the limelight. Street racing quickly became the (painfully hip) new darling of the videogames industry. Everyone wanted a piece of the action. Sure, franchises like *Need for Speed* and *Test Drive* had been doing it for years, but even they had to adapt. Japanese tuners, gaudy vinyl, crunk music and nitrous were the new flavour of the month.

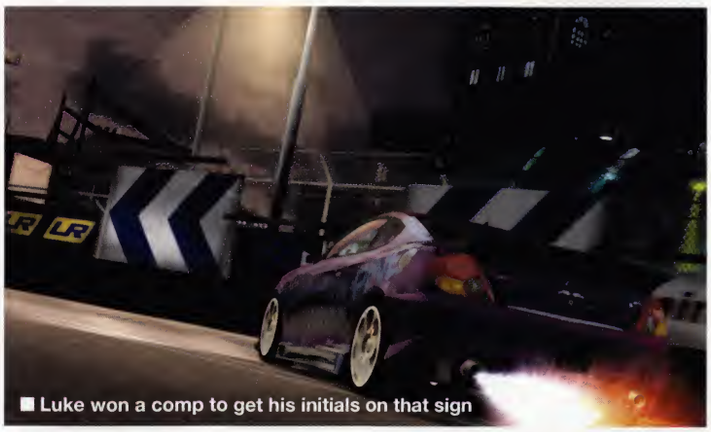
It started with the likes of *Midnight Club* and continued with *Need for Speed Underground* and its various spin-offs, and it stumbled with absolute tripe like *SRS: Street Racing Syndicate* and the woeful *Ford Street Racing*.

Juiced fell somewhere in between. The freestyle mode was neat, awarding you points for gnarly manoeuvres like 360 spins, J-turns, boomerang turns and bootleg turns, and the fact it featured Aussie cars in the shape of the Monaro CV8 and Falcon XR8 was a big plus. However there really wasn't enough variety in the tracks and it lacked some of the flash that would have made it really memorable. It was nowhere near as


■ Cash in winnings for Dancer Dollars? Genius!

■ Paint decals. Art or wank?

■ That's textbook powersliding, if you catch our *drift*



■ Luke won a comp to get his initials on that sign

■ ...actually that's a lie... we can't back that up

monumentally bad as *SRS*, but it didn't quite have enough gas in the tank to tackle the big boys.

"WE'LL GET SOME OVERHEAD LIFTERS AND SOME FOUR BARREL QUADS OH YEAH..."

Enter *Juiced 2*. We're at the business end now. The cream has well and truly risen to the top and punters aren't going to settle with half-arsed rip-offs of a popular genre anymore. When interest starts to wane, going forward there just won't be enough room in the market for average street racers – just great ones. In other words, *Juiced 2* will need to put up or shut up.

Fortunately, it appears Juice Games is well aware of this.

Juiced 2 actually represents quite a shake up for the fledgling racing series, marking a move toward real-life competition as opposed to boy racer fantasy bollocks. It seems the glossy world of illegal street racing is starting to fade and *Juiced 2* is shunning it in favour of high budget, sanctioned real-world events.

Circuit racing will naturally make a return along with drag battles (a mode that has inexplicably gone MIA from *Need for Speed*). *Juiced*'s trademark show off mode is also slated for a comeback, something we imagine will look plenty nice with the potential for visual prowess the PS3 exudes. However the most notable new inclusion is drift racing, in response and the fast growing spectacle of drifting. Exactly what we can expect from this mode is vague, but if it's anywhere near as spectacular as the real sport can be, prepare to be entertained.

■ Night races, like tight t-shirts, benefit from high-beaming

"*Juiced*'s trademark show off mode is slated for a comeback... [it] will look plenty nice with the potential for visual prowess the PS3 exudes."

"A FUEL INJECTION CUTOFF AND CHROME PLATED RODS OH YEAH..."

Unlike the original, which was set within the confines of one fictional city, *Juiced 2* will see the series go global, featuring courses and events in San Francisco, New York, Chicago, London, Rome, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Sydney. Not surprisingly, *Juiced 2* will chart an "an in-depth career adventure" from novice to world-champion (a familiar fairy-tale no doubt, but nonetheless one well worth mentioning). A souped up career mode and an injection of local flavour with Sydney-based tracks is sure to appeal to fans.

In conjunction with its real-world events, *Juiced 2* will also feature a number of real-world drivers – some of the best drifting stars on the track today. Intriguingly, Juice Games is boasting *Juiced 2* will feature what it has dubbed Driver DNA, a system that faithfully recreates the driving styles of each one of the real drift jockeys in the game. The system will actually go even further and you'll be able to 'capture' your own Driver DNA to create races for yourself (against yourself? Woah...) as well as download friends or competitor's DNA to pit yourself against.

Of course, the real stars of any racing game are undoubtedly the cars, but unfortunately details are scant. If you can see it on a screenshot on this spread then it's in *Juiced 2*. Anything further is anyone's guess. All we know from the developer at this point is that it'll feature a wide range of rides from "entry-level hatchbacks" to "monster street cars" and "exotic super cars". Sounds a lot like *Need for Speed Carbon* to us, but that's hardly a bad thing. *Carbon* made quite a few mistakes, but the scope of the garage was not one of them. We'll definitely be seeing quite a few rice rockets, but we expect the line-up will be bolstered with some US muscle, European elegance and hopefully some Australian grunt to boot. Still, we'll need to get back to you next month regarding *Juiced 2*'s vehicle roster, once we've accrued some decent hands-on time. **Luke Reilly**

WHAT THEY SAY:

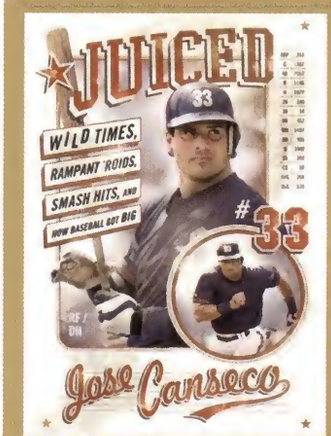
■ **"*Juiced 2* is the only racing game to covey the buzz, rivalry, personality and sheer excitement of the fast emerging real street racing events."**

WHAT WE SAY:

■ **The new tack could well set it apart from the competition.**

JUNGLE JUICE

Just in case there is any confusion, *Juiced* has nothing to do with the book of the same name. *Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits & How Baseball Got Big* is an autobiography by baseball legend José Canseco that primarily deals with anabolic steroids, drawing upon the personal experiences of Canseco. The book actually kick-started a Congressional inquiry into steroid use in Major League Baseball. In it Canseco takes personal credit for introducing steroids to baseball, claims up to 85% of major league players took steroids and says steroid use is not a bad thing provided you're being monitored by a physician. Not sure about the old love spuds though (he's twice divorced). So anyway, it's got nothing to do with street racing at all.



PS3 PS2 PSP

PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** RACING
- **PLAYERS:** 1-100
- **RELEASE:** JUNE 2007
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
- **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS
- **WEB:** www.codemasters.com

■ Colin McRae has been in more rallys than Andre Agassi! What? It makes sense...

COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

Colin spills his dirty secrets...

An average person blinks around 16 times a minute. A rally driver behind the wheel? They'd be lucky to blink more than 30 times over an entire stage. They just can't afford to. Look at Marcus Grönholm's face the next time you tune into the WRC. That wide-eyed permanent state of shock may make it look like he's just walked in on the milkman banging his wife like a Salvation Army drum, but it's keeping him alive.

What has this got to do with *Colin McRae: DIRT*? Little, really – but we did get to use a neat Salvation Army drum simile. But moving onto the topic at hand.

DIRTY DEEDS

Now that the dust around *MotorStorm* has settled we can look into the future of off-road racing and scope out what's in store for us. To be fair to both *MotorStorm* and *Colin McRae: DIRT*, while a cursory glance at the two may leave you thinking they're rather similar, the truth couldn't be any more different. Comparing *MotorStorm* and *DIRT* would be like comparing *Burnout* to *V8 Supercars* – both fantastic games in their own right but both exceedingly different to one another. The similarities are there but it's a fruitless exercise.

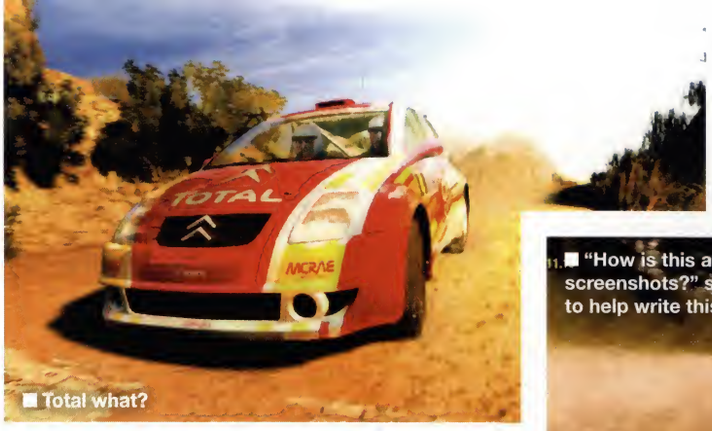
We managed to get a look at the latest build of *DIRT* this month, and we were mighty impressed. While *DIRT* will feature a range of new events like Rally Cross and Rally Raid, a great deal of *Colin McRae: DIRT* will still focus on traditional point-to-point rallying, meaning there's only one car on screen. Although the likes of *MotorStorm* look awesome with up to 12 cars and a stack of scenery on-screen, imagine how much *more* awesome a game could look if you diverted the juice going into creating those other 11 cars into just *one* car and a stack of *prettier* scenery. Got it yet? That's *Colin McRae: DIRT*. When it comes to rally games, you just haven't seen cars *this* detailed. You just haven't seen vegetation *this* lush. You haven't seen dust *this*... dusty. Best of all, most of the trackside obstacles are as deformable as the cars. Run into a guardrail and it'll buckle on impact, run into

INFO BYTE

Colin McRae: DIRT will also feature hill climbs, including the famous Pike's peak International. All 12.4 miles and 150 turns of the perilous Rocky Mountains course will be included.

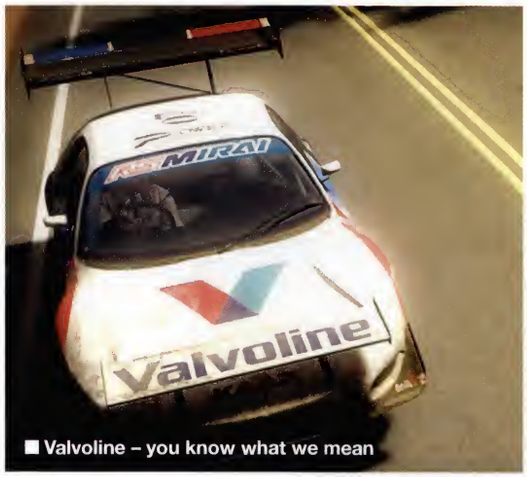
■ More dirt than a copy of *New Idea*. Not that we read *New Idea*

■ Peugeot – second to Gérard Depardieu as France's greatest export



■ Total what?

■ "How is this any different to all the other screenshots?" said the useless colleague we asked to help write this caption

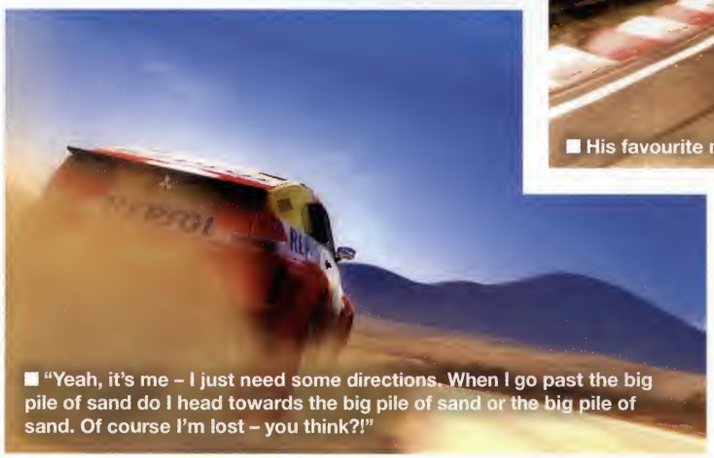


■ Valvoline – you know what we mean

■ His favourite movie? *Sideways*! BOOM-TISH!

DIRT MERCHANT

Colin McRae, the son of five-time British Rally Champion, Jimmy McRae, is a former Word Rally Championship driver. McRae began his career in 1986 and became a regular competitor at Scottish Rally Championship events. He won his first WRC event at the Rally of New Zealand in 1993 driving a Subaru Legacy, and won the overall title two years later in an Impreza. These days he keeps himself busy with the R4, a performance car he designed and developed, built by DJM Race Preparation.


■ "Yeah, it's me – I just need some directions. When I go past the big pile of sand do I head towards the big pile of sand or the big pile of sand. Of course I'm lost – you think?!"

■ This guy can't see the forest for the trees (does anyone even know what that means?)

a fence and it'll shatter into splinters.

The first race we tried our hand at was an all-asphalt stage in Japan in the latest Subaru Impreza. With the high grip offered by the tarmac and with our Suby slung low to the ground we were able to fling it around with reckless abandon, admiring the rebuilt handling model in the process.

The second race we attempted was an off-road blitz through a dusty, twisted stage in one of *DIRT*'s historical relics, the Fiat 131 Abarth. The 131 may not look like much, but underneath those hideously dated, square-jawed '70s aesthetics lies a car that won the World Rally Championship three times (1977, 1978 and 1980). As a result this pasta rocket packs a mean punch, something we learned fairly quickly when we jammed down the throttle. We don't know whether it was the fact that the gravel track lent itself far more easily to cheek-clenchingly tense powerslides or whether it was the rustic charm of the borderline antique Fiat, but either way this was the part of our demo we enjoyed most. Keeping the geriatric jalopy on the road was a hoot; we were blasting over jumps, narrowly skirting past walls and trees, four-wheel drifting into blind corners and fishtailing out of them like a supercharged salmon. We were whipping past the scenery at such a rate of knots we barely noticed incredible visuals touches like the way sunlight pierces the windscreen and illuminates the console and dash when the car is at the right angle. We actually had to pull over to admire the meticulously modelled interior (real men use cockpit cam) by moving the right stick. Later still, when we were gawking at the dials and buttons again we ploughed into a cutting, but it was just as well. The impact sheared off our bonnet and we were introduced to a whole new world of unprecedented detail. Peering through the now cracked windscreen we not only saw the Fiat's feisty little two-litre engine snarling away, but also hoses, leads and all manner of other engine bay goodies. The detail truly is astonishing. Hell, look closer and you'll see the engine jostle each time you plant the accelerator.

The third race was a circuit event against a pack of Dakar-style dune buggies. It was tough (the buggy is light with sensitive steering and is highly susceptible to oversteer) but it was fast, frenzied fun.

THE SOUNDS OF VIOLENCE

No form of motorsport is tougher on cars than rallying, but it's rare that the sheer forces applied to these vehicles are translated with such authenticity. In terms of showing cosmetic damage, rally games have always been on the cutting edge (*DIRT* is no exception, sideswipes strip the paint to the metal, panels and bumpers crack and crumple with amazing realism). However, it's the sound of *DIRT* that really captures the atmosphere of rallying. We don't think another game has made us feel like we're actually inside a car the way *DIRT* does. The sound in *DIRT* isn't limited to the growl of the engine – you get the full gambit of audio ranging from the metallic groans as your car protests all those negative Gs you're throwing at it to the squeak of your suspension travelling as you bounce over a series of rolling undulations. What about panels flapping against the bodywork and tufts of grass slapping against the undercarriage? Yep, we're pretty sure we heard those too. Buckle up. **Luke Reilly**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ *"Colin McRae: DIRT* will roar in with all the sensational realism and sublime car handling that the series is renowned for..."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Open up a tab at your local car wash because things are about to get well and truly grubby!

PS3 PS2 PSP

PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** TACTICAL SHOOTER
- **PLAYERS:** 1-16
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007 (TBC)
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER:** RED STORM/UBISOFT
- **WEB:** www.ubi.com

■ "Damn weeds are everywhere!" "Why don't you use some Roundup, y'know, *instead* of bullets?" "Hey – I'm the farmer here, okay?"

GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

Soldier on...

Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter? Honestly, what is up with that title? What's next, *Tiger Woods Professional Ballhitter*? *Resident Evil Involuntary Pantswetter*?

Fortunately its title is the only naff thing about the game, because when it comes to the tactical shooter genre, the original *GRAW* is without peer. Now *GRAW2* promises to build on the strengths of its predecessor by refining the already striking visuals, enhancing the strategy and tweaking the AI of enemies and teammates to staggering new heights of realism.

Set in the year 2014, *GRAW2* centres on the rising conflict between Mexican loyalists and insurgent rebel forces, and the threat that the outcome poses to the US. As a result, the Ghost Recon team will be deployed into skirmishes on US soil for the first time in the series, defending the border from the neighbouring banditos in and around El Paso, Texas and taking the fight to them in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

GRAW2's looks are a little deceiving. At first glance they don't appear to be hugely different from those of the previous game, but look a little closer and you'll notice the incredible particle effects on display – particularly with the debris from explosions and swirling dust clouds that permeate your surroundings – as well as heat blur and astonishingly lifelike environmental textures and character animations. Every touch combines to create one of the most photo realistic games we've ever seen.

The landscapes are also much larger than they were in *GRAW*, and the topography is far more diverse – throughout the game you'll lead your troops through winding mountain ranges, barren deserts and built-up urban developments.

Speaking of leading troops, *GRAW2* features a surprisingly user-friendly order system for your team. The 'Cross-Com 2.0' system allows you to just point your aiming reticule at areas of the map and press ↑ on the d-pad to direct your squad members to that specific location. You can also hold down the L1 button to see what your squad sees (they have camera's attached to their helmets), which is crucial for setting up ambushes. It's a simple system, and in no time you'll be getting your comrades to distract an enemy tank with cover fire, before throwing out a smoke bomb to disguise your movements and running in to lob a satchel charge right under its treads. BA-BOOOM!

When it comes to squad-based shooting on the PS3, *GRAW2*'s only serious rival is looking like Ubisoft's other sublime tactical outing, *Rainbow Six Vegas*. So uh, hey Ubisoft? Stop being so damn awesome. No seriously, you're making us look really bad in front of our wives. **Tristan Ogilvie**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ **"[*GRAW2*] will heighten the intensity and bring gamers an even more amazing experience."**

WHAT WE SAY:

■ **There's never been a tactical shooter that packages so much depth with such accessible controls. Should be a classic.**

■ Ubisoft sure does great graphics. Its impression of Humphrey Bogart? Hmm, so-so

INFO BYTE

Frank Black, legendary frontman for punk rock band The Pixies, recorded a cover of The Stooges' 'Gimme Danger' specifically for the first *GRAW2* trailer. It's not known whether the track will feature in the game.

■ Red = bad, blue = good. It's the opposite of the *Matrix* pills!

BLOW YOUR COVER

GRAW2 presents an extensive amount of destructibility in its environment, with all manner of trucks, enemy tanks and highly flammable petrol stations just waiting to go off like Sydney Harbour on New Year's Eve, after a well-aimed rocket launch or satchel charge toss. We found out how volatile our surroundings were the hard way, after taking cover behind a parked car for too long – which was promptly ripped into shards by an enemy grenade, trapping us under a shower of car fragments and leaving us screaming for a medic.

■ "Do you think he saw us?" "What, is that some kinda dinosaur?"

PS3 PS2 PSP

PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
- **PLAYERS:** TBC
- **RELEASE:** LATE 2007
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** FUNTASTIC
- **DEVELOPER:** PROPAGANDA
- **WEB:** propagandagames.go.com

TUROK

The almost extinct franchise is resurrected on PS3

Despite showing incredible potential in its first installment, the *Turok* series has suffered some disastrous setbacks in recent years. It's one of the grandfathers of the console FPS genre but each subsequent sequel seemed to drift further from the style and success of the original. The last game, *Turok Evolution*, was such a financial disaster that it was the main contributing factor towards Acclaim's 2004 bankruptcy.

It takes more than a bankrupt parent company to keep this dino-killer down, though. Propaganda is currently hard at work on a very promising return to form for the troubled series. *Turok* is running on an advanced version of the super-powerful Unreal 3 graphics engine (*Rainbow Six Vegas*) allowing it to render lush jungle locations with surprising detail.

Impressively, the game's design is even sharper than its visuals. The more ridiculous trappings of previous *Turok* titles (mutated zombies and mechanised dinos packing gattling guns) have been hastily dumped like a truckload of *Turok Evolutions* into a landfill. Your main enemies in the game will be fellow humans who will attempt to outgun you with their tactics and teamwork.

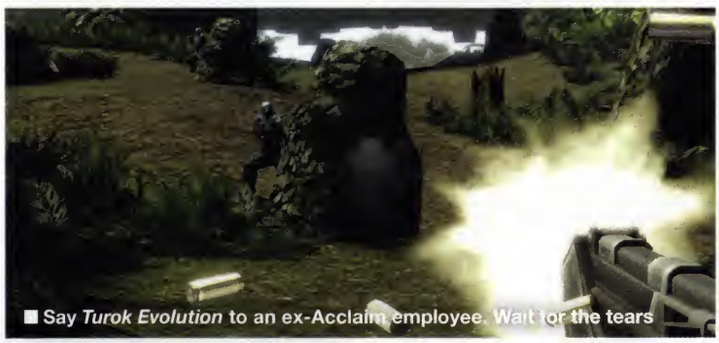
You could hardly have a *Turok* game without dinosaurs, but rather than inventing increasingly implausible ways to make compelling enemies of them, they're employed more as mobile natural disasters. They will attack you on sight, but for the first time ever in a *Turok* title, they're also just as likely to attack your enemies. Rather than pounding clip after clip into a charging T-Rex, smarter players can choose to use the shotgun's handy secondary firing mode – a bright flare. By firing a flare into a group of enemies you can direct any nearby dinosaurs' attention at them, then wade in guns blazing to mop up the remains after your enemies and the dinos have fought to the death.

The shotgun's not the only weapon with a useful alternate fire mode either. When you don't want to use the chaingun's traditional heavy fire mode you can set it down as an automated gun turret. The flamethrower also handily doubles as a grenade launcher.

As well as these weapons of mass destruction you can also use the silence of traditional hunting weapons like a knife and bow to your advantage for some stealthy kills. After successfully stalking an enemy and grabbing them, the perspective switches to a third-person view for a gruesome throat-slitting fatality. Turok's iconic bow has also been augmented significantly so that it's now powerful enough to literally nail enemies to trees. Now that's nasty.

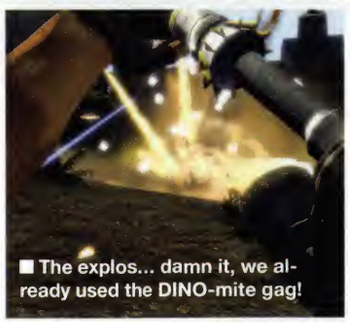
Expect us to head back into the jungle for some more high-tech dino-wrangling very soon. **Narayan Pattison**

■ "That's for *Jurassic Park III*!"



■ Say *Turok Evolution* to an ex-Acclaim employee. Wait for the tears

■ Crotch mounted chaingun – the gift for the man who has everything



■ The explos... damn it, we already used the DINO-mite gag!

■ "How about a joke? A T-rex walks into a bar, the bartender says, 'Why the long face?' No? Wait, I have more... AARRRGHHH!"

■ The explosive in his rockets? DINO-mite of course! We're here all week...

■ "You're extinct," quipped Captain Obvious

WHAT THEY SAY:

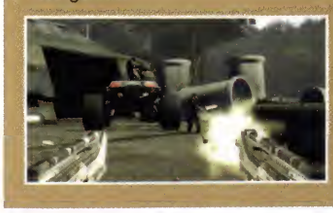
■ "We're emphasizing a great story, unforgettable characters and topnotch gameplay."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Call that a press release? Totally should have gone with "He will Tu-ROK you!" Anybody? No?

MULTI-PLANNED

Although no firm details have been revealed yet, *Turok*'s multiplayer mode is planned to be a large part of the game. The tasty nuggets we've unearthed so far definitely have us drooling. Drivable vehicles and destructible cover like tree stumps sure sound interesting, but what we're really keen to play around with is the flare gun. As well as the human players, dinos will roam the playing field and by tagging one of your opponents with a flare you can turn them into an instant snack for a passing T-rex. Pure genius.



PS3 PS2 PSP

PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
- **PLAYERS:** TBC
- **RELEASE:** WINTER 2007
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** RED-ANT
- **DEVELOPER:** MIDWAY STUDIOS
- **WEB:** www.midway.com

■ When mother-in-laws attack...

■ "Dude – why is your piss that colour?"
"I had a Berocca this morning. It looks like I'm waving a lightsabre over here!"

BLACKSITE: AREA 51

The truth is out there

Ever since *The X-Files* became complete and utter crap, it seems that nobody could really care less about that huge area of desert in the Nevada desert called Area 51. That crazy fear of aliens, the unknown, and the paranormal that was so popular in the 1990s has died down an extent. In a way its almost as if games have followed suit. Sure there have been a couple of high profile alien blasters, but nothing like before. Back in the day it seemed like all we ever did was shoot aliens. Nowadays we shoot terrorists, a couple of quasi Euro-Russians, and generally just blindly defend the American way. Awesome.

Or maybe not, because it seems like the times they are a-changin' yet again. With the present release of *Resistance: Fall of Man*, it looks like aliens are back on the gaming agenda once more, and we couldn't be happier. *Blacksite: Area 51* is the latest game helping turn the tide, and it is looking like a potential slobber knocker of a game.

A 'Blacksite' is defined as an area of land that the government has curtained off from the media due to paranormal or secret government goings on, and these sorts of shenanigans will undoubtedly have a huge part to play in *Blacksite: Area 51*. Actual concrete details on the storyline of the game are pretty thin on the ground, but the plot appears to hinge on a non-linear universe where your moral choices actually affect the outcome of the game. There's no real detail yet on how interactive the choices are, or how widespread the effect, but the premise is a curious prospect nonetheless. Apparently the game will force you to choose between duty to your personal orders, and you own moral standards. Whichever decision involves us blowing the crap out of things with some big-arse weapons will suit us fine, thanks...

CONTROL YOURSELF...

Midway's previous shooter, the original *Area 51*, was a bit of an overlooked game upon its release. It hardly set the hay on

■ "Take that, you bastard wall! What? My dad was killed by a wall. Sure, he was drunk and he drove his car into it, but that's beside the point..."

■ "Okay but this is the last toilet stop we're making, otherwise I'm turning this thing back to Rygell 17..."

■ Shoulder-mounted guns – handy for when you need to type and kill at the same time...

"Aiming and the general feel of the weapons is amazingly close to perfect, allowing players to strafe, lead their shots and destroy alien scum"

fire, but it was a well-produced action experience with standards far and above your bog-standard shooter. *Blacksite: Area 51*, however, has cranked everything up a notch in all areas, and all aspects of the game are looking highly polished as a result.

The game's controls are one of the most improved aspects we've noticed so far. The aiming and the general feel of the weapons is amazingly close to perfect, allowing players to strafe, lead their shots, and generally just destroy alien scum in a accessible and comfortable manner.

The squad controls are also extremely well balanced, and super-easy to pick up. Ordering your teammates is as simple as aiming at an object and pressing L2. These orders are completely context sensitive, meaning that if you aim at a door and press L2, for example, your team will blow the door off its hinges. You can also order your troops to commandeer vehicles, take cover, set up and attack, all with a simple push of L1. A welcome change from overly complicated squad set-ups, this user friendly system could well be one of *Blacksite*'s secret weapons.

I'M AN ALIEN, I'M AN ILLEGAL ALIEN

As you have no doubt guessed from the game's title, those damned dirty aliens have a pretty huge part to play in *Area 51*, in fact the place just wouldn't seem right without them. The ETs we've seen so far are looking like a cross between those buggers from *Independence Day* (booooo!) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (hurray!). In other words, like every alien you have ever seen in a movie or TV show (or indeed real life, if you're one of those anal probing types. Oh sure, that inflatable cushion is for your "haemorrhoids").

But just because the design is a little clichéd doesn't mean they enemies don't look great, because they absolutely do. The animations in particular are extremely creepy, brilliantly creating spider-like movements that are completely convincing, and pretty damn scary.

Best of all however, is the humongous worm which pops up unceremoniously at the end of Midway's most recent trailer. After witnessing the outright catastrophic destruction caused by a falling meteorite, the enormous worm-alien is the last thing seen before the trailer fades out to black, leaving a truly lasting impression.

Multiplayer, as expected, will also play a huge role in *Blacksite: Area 51*. General game modes such as Deathmatch and Capture the Flag will be included, in addition to game types more specific to the themes of Area 51, such as 'Human vs. Reborn' and 'Siege'. Again details on how these gametypes will work are scarce, but we are looking forward to seeing how *Blacksite* makes the transition from single player campaign to multiplayer.

Regardless of how little we have actually seen of *Blacksite: Area 51*, we certainly have been extremely impressed with how the game is shaping up so far. The graphics, even at this stage, are looking appropriately out of this world, but what is even more impressive is the fact that the entire game just oozes quality. The sound, the controls, the squad system – everything just seems to add to the high production feel of this game. With all these aspects already operating at a high, well-tuned level, its hard to see how this game can possibly go wrong. *Blacksite: Area 51* is class in a glass, and we can't wait till its release this winter. **Mark Serrels**

■ "Sorry, you missed the flight. But it's cool, I've got another chopper for you to ride..." [unzipping sound]

INFO BYTE

Midway has confirmed that players will actually be able to control an alien at some point in the game. The whys and wherefores? We know nothing at this point.

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The player's modern-day emotions and fears are driven into a world charged with grave responsibility."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ *Blacksite: Area 51* will almost certainly elevate itself above the average humdrum first-person shooter.

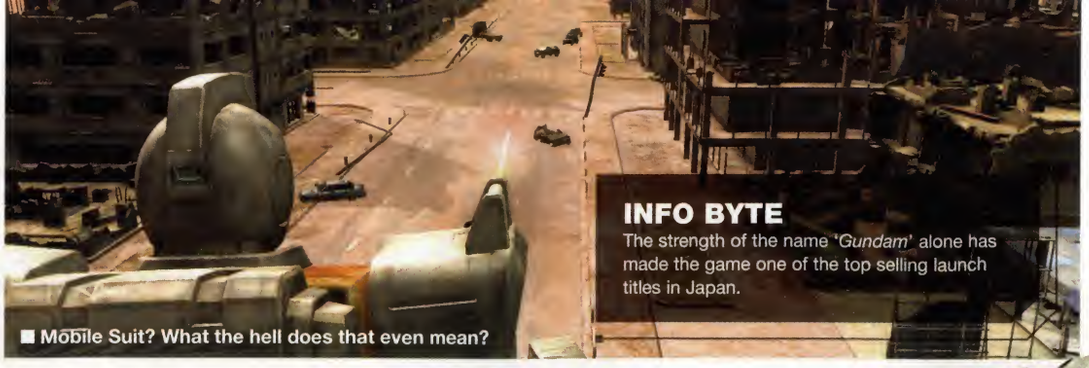
MAPS ARE FOR PUSSIES

Maps? Leave them for the missus, boys: we're flying solo. Apparently *Blacksite: Area 51* has a multifaceted level design, which deliberately allows players to take multiple routes to the same goal. This enables players to flank the enemy, and basically just use your teammates in interesting, creative ways. Midway has helped accentuate this by setting up numerous, accessible, destructible cover points, adding a more strategic element to the blast 'em up game play. Just make sure you don't get lost, children.

PS3 PS2 PSP

PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** MECH ACTION
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
- **DEVELOPER:** BANDAI NAMCO
- **WEB:** www.atari.com.au



■ Mobile Suit? What the hell does that even mean?

INFO BYTE

The strength of the name '*Gundam*' alone has made the game one of the top selling launch titles in Japan.

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: TARGET IN SIGHT

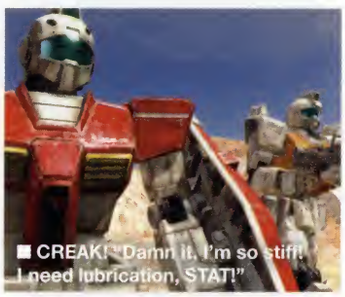
Suit up and bring it on!

It was not all that long ago that giant robots were just about everywhere. The '80s influence of Japanese cult classic shows like *Macross*, *Voltron*, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and of course, the granddaddy of them all, *Astro Boy,* helped pave the way for a new age and genre. The Mech Warrior was born. Since then, it has had many incarnations, both good and bad. There's something about giant metal behemoths pounding the crap out of each other that never really loses its appeal. In fact, walloping skyscraper-sized adversaries into another time zone, or slicing and dicing them with a sword is a lot of goddamn (or is it *Gundam*? Sorry…) serious fun.

Laying the smack down, is the premise for *MSG: Target in Sight*. Plain and simple. You can choose to ally yourself with either of the two warring factions from the immensely popular anime series, be it Earth Federation Forces or the Principality of Zeon Army. Then it's a fight for survival, with the winner claiming victory in the One Year War. We like it when the stakes are high, and they don't get much higher than these! You fight in groups or all on your lonesome, giving you multiple forms of combat to ponder (see "SIX MILLION WAYS TO DIE, CHOOSE ONE…"). Some enemies will just require blasting into oblivion, others have specific body parts that you'll need to target and remove or destroy, in order to advance.

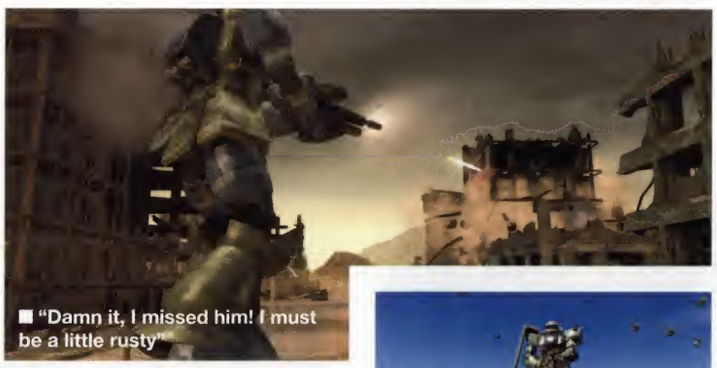
The further you progress, the more pilots and Mobile Suits become available to you. Once acquired, you can upgrade their offensive and defensive capabilities, so you can pimp your ride to your liking, and blow the crap out of enemies, your way. And don't think for a second that if you're gallivanting around, taking on a veritable army, one step at a time, you're not going to get some wear and tear on your sweet machine. If you catch a beating, your Mech show signs of damage, be it dents, scratched paint job, missing limb… whatever. Just hit the garage between missions and you'll be as good as new. Just a little piece of advice… if a suit is being repaired or modified, it may very well be out of commission for your next sortie, so it adds an element of real time strategy to your decisions.

The "Giant Robot" genre is one that's been around for a donkey's age, and is need of a booster shot in the arm. The buzz around *MSG: Target in Sight* is pretty nasty though, so it may not be the game to take the genre to the next level. We'll wait and see. **Dave Kozicki**



■ CREAK! "Damn it, I'm so stiff! I need lubrication, STAT!"

■ Forget about this robot – he's 'armless



■ "Damn it, I missed him! I must be a little rusty"

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The PS3 has brought the sci-fi action game to life with stunning high-definition graphics, taking the seminal Japanese anime into the next-generation of gaming."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ The prognosis from abroad isn't looking good. Verdict next month.

SIX MILLION WAYS TO DIE, CHOOSE ONE...

MSG: Target in Sight wants you to think before you just dive in to any situation. Do you support your team mate using a ranged attack with your blaster? Take to the skies for an intense aerial assault? Or do you rush in against several other Mechs for a little up close and personal fisticuffs? Maybe spark up that laser sword and liberate a head from its body? The choice is yours. You've got to really mix it up and capitalise on every opportunity.

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Havoc Gloves
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Chargeball Glove
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Disassembler
Breaks down objects to create new ones

CHECK OUT THESE COOL GADGETS!

PG Mild violence

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PS3 PS2 PSP

PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **PLAYERS:** TBC
- **RELEASE:** WINTER 2007
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** RED ANT
- **DEVELOPER:** MIDWAY
- **WEB:** www.midway.com

■ "It's bullet time, bitches!"

STRANGLEHOLD

Wooooooo...

Gamers who have watched celebrated Hong Kong action flick *Hard Boiled*, or even John Woo's Hollywood movies such as *Face Off*, will no doubt be grinning like goons at the very mention of Midway's new bullet-riddled action title, *Stranglehold*. Co-produced by the 'Woo-man' himself, *Stranglehold* looks set to make your brain explode with the sort of cinematic bullet ballet that would make even Max Payne stop and say "woah... enough already".

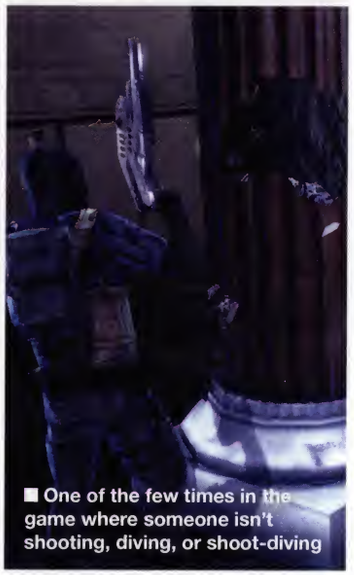
A spiritual successor to Woo's *Hard Boiled*, in *Stranglehold* you play the role of Sgt Tequila Yuen, played by Chow Yun Fat, returning to the role from the original movie in which he starred in. Facing Hong Kong crime lords and the Russian Mafia head on, Tequila is taking part in a story as old as the videogame medium itself – he is attempting to rescue his kidnapped girlfriend from some bad guys.

When discussing *Stranglehold*, the afore mentioned *Max Payne* series is a good place to start. With a slo-mo game mechanic similar to the *Max Payne* titles, it would be too easy to say that the 'Tequila Time' feature in *Stranglehold* is a straight rip off of *Payne*'s bullet-time (since Rockstar was undoubtedly inspired by the John Woo's trademark cinematics when creating this feature). Its still fair to say, however, that *Stranglehold*'s slo-mo game mechanic works in a similar way to some of the gameplay aspects of *Max Payne*.

But in some ways 'Tequila Time' is more multi-layered, and can be best described as an attempt to squeeze Woo-like movie cinematics into a viable videogame design. In addition to the ability to slow time down, other functions include the 'Barrage', which causes your character to shoot a flurry of well aimed bullets taking out all enemies in an extremely stylish manner. The 'spin attack' is similar, except that, as the name suggests, it's a 360 degree attack that mercilessly takes out all enemies within a certain radius like 'Boom boom boom – how do you like them apples?' In other words: it's great, and it kills everyone.

In an attempt to squeeze even more awesomeness into *Stranglehold*, Midway has added destructible and completely interactive environments into the mix; from what we've seen so far, this move is far more than simply cosmetic. Destructible environments can be used to take out enemies, and creative players can use their surroundings in extremely cool ways. Sliding down banisters, swinging from chandeliers, all these things are possible, helping to suck gamers into an extremely reactive game world.

We are extremely excited by the potential of *Stranglehold*, and hope that the type of interactive gameplay we have seen will match its initial promise. One thing is for sure, as long as Woo and Chow Yun Fat are involved, this game will look cool. Hopefully, as a result, it will also be extremely fun to play. With our dual-wielded pistols in hand, we very much look forward to *Stranglehold*'s release this coming winter. **Mark Serrels**



■ One of the few times in the game where someone isn't shooting, diving, or shoot-diving

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "It's an action shooter that truly encapsulates the authentic cinematic John Woo experience."

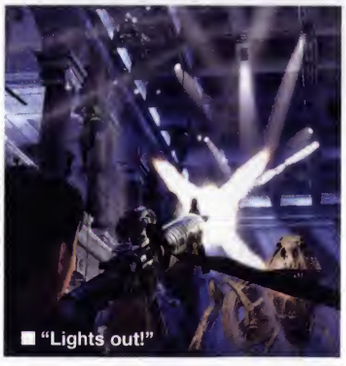
WHAT WE SAY:

■ If the cinematic gun fights translate into compelling gameplay, then this game will be unstoppable.

■ "Dude, these new supersoakers totally kick ass! I just shot him in the groin – it looks like he's pissed his pants!"

INFO BYTE

Stranglehold is officially Midway's first game to use the much vaunted 'Unreal Engine 3'. Basically this means the game will look frickin' amazing. Here's hoping it plays the same way.



■ "Lights out!"

SLOWING IT DOWN

In addition to what looks like being a kick-arse single-player experience, Midway has also promised to implement a multiplayer facet that could quite possibly blow your little socks off. How? Well how's about multiplayer 'Tequila Time' for starters. Promising that their version of slo-mo multiplayer is completely revolutionary and has never been done before, Midway claims that their solution to any problems multiplayer 'Tequila Time' might have is an extremely creative one. Tragically, no information on exactly what this solution is could be found; we look forward to finding out precisely how this feature will work when the game is released in a few month's time.

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MARCH 2007

M Moderate violence

PlayStation.2

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PS3 **PS2** PSP

PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **DEVELOPER:** SONY SANTA MONICA
- **WEB:** au.playstation.com

■ The most epic fisting in recorded history

■ "Who wants the drumstick?"

GOD OF WAR II

The end begins...

The great thing about *God of War II* is that from the moment it kicks off it's instantly familiar. The time that passed since you played the original simply melts away and it's like you never skipped a beat. It's going to be one of those rare sequels that doesn't need to shake up the formula because it got it so right the first time out. *God of War II* is like returning to the warm embrace of an old girlfriend. Straight away you know what buttons to push for maximum pleasure and in return she shows you a few new moves she picked up during your time away from each other. Plus, as is usually the case with old flames, she looks better than ever (*God of War II*'s visuals are that gobsmackingly good you'll forget all about your PS3... temporarily)

Our preview was short, abruptly ending on a tantalisingly tense cliffhanger, but we can say without hesitation that *God Of War II* packs more intensity and excitement into its opening 15 minutes than some games manage in their entire duration. If you thought the arrival of the first boss battle in the first *God Of War* was quick, prepare to readjust that opinion. In *God of War II* you'll be lucky to last two minutes before you're going toe-to-toe with a 100 foot tall statue that wants nothing more than to turn you into a smear on the soil.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Didn't Kratos become a god? What's he doing going mano-a-mano with the garden gnome from hell?

WAR LORD

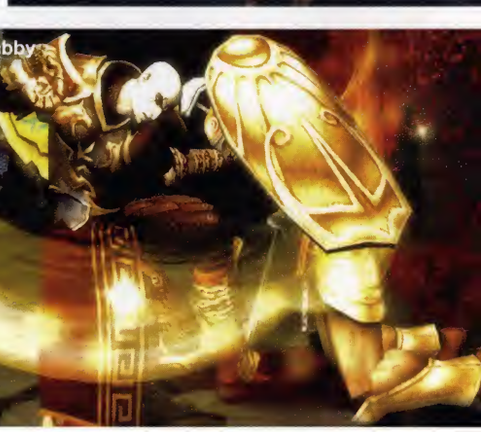
Well, it seems Kratos has been quite busy between games and has set about laying waste to cities all over Greece. An army of Spartan warriors has been doing the business on Earth while he rests upon his throne on Olympus. When *God of War II* opens Kratos has sent his loyal subjects to conquer Rhodes, a city whose name you may recognise as the location for one of the seven ancient wonders – a giant statue of the Greek god Helios that stood astride the harbour, the Colossus of Rhodes. But we'll get to that later. At any rate, the gods are not impressed. Although it may not be obvious to him, Kratos is making all the same mistakes as his predecessor Ares did and the gods, particularly Athena, are sick of it. Pride comes before the fall, and Kratos is about to go down hard.

Turning his back on Athena, the fearsome deity descends from Olympus intent on delivering the decisive blow himself. You're treated to a few moments of a gigantic Kratos crushing soldiers and razing buildings (not playable, unfortunately) before he's suddenly struck by a bolt of lightning, shrunk to human size and stripped of his immortality. Once again trapped in the puny proportions of a mere human Kratos is mad as a cut badger – but he hasn't time to stew over it because Athena is keen to clot Kratos' bloodlust once and for all. Assuming control over the Colossus of Rhodes she wrenches its feet from its anchor points on the marina and immediately heads towards you.

BLOOD IN BLOOD OUT

Kratos isn't one to take anything lying down (unless it's the sweet caress of the tongues of half-a-dozen of his finest concubines) so he quickly sets about socking it to Athena in the only way he knows how.

Ultra violence.



■ "Man, I need to change agents. I said I wanted to ride my *whores* a lot more in this game!"

INFO BYTE

If you heard the rumour that *God of War II* will run in 720p when played on a PS3 you may want to ignore it – word is the gossip is bollocks. Pity.

■ Kratos doesn't get mad, he gets stabby

■ "Look honey, take a picture, I'm hangliding! AARRGHHH, look at me, AARGH I'm dead!"

■ The lengths some people will go to for a killer serving of buffalo wings...

■ "No, this is all a big misunderstanding. No, I know you told me you were going to feed me to your chicks, but these aren't my kind of chicks...

■ Crushing defeat?

This is where *God of War II* begins, throwing you head-first into the action mere moments before an epic clash of the titans. After laying waste to the first unfortunate wave of Rhodes' remaining hoplites (making use of all your hard-earned *God of War* combos and some even more frenzied new ones) you'll encounter the hulking statue of Helios straight away. It'll be the massive bronze monstrosity trying to swat you with its bus-sized hands – it's pretty hard to miss. After avoiding the mammoth mitts of the colossus for as long as we felt we could, the sight of a locked-and-loaded ballista to our left quickly staved off the panic that was slowly beginning to set in. A giant rock will make short work of this fellow we thought, sending a boulder that would sink Tasmania hurtling toward the statue. However, before we could even start high five-ing each other the Colossus snatched it and crushed it between its hands like a peanut before setting about trying to turn us into a pancake again.

What about firing Kratos himself from the ballista? Now THAT'S just crazy enough to work! You'll need to weaken it with your Blades of Chaos first or it'll pluck you from the sky and slam you face-first into the nearest wall. Once you've got the colossus licking its wounds you can launch yourself onto it to deliver a hefty blow courtesy of the on-screen button-prompt minigames *God of War* made heavy use of last time around. After a little eye surgery you'll be tossed across the rooftops, unceremoniously ploughing through several floors in the process, before landing in a pool. After a quick swimming refresher course, a block puzzle and a few more waves of goons to dispatch you'll trigger the second part of the boss encounter. It's similar to the first, although once you've dealt it enough damage you'll need to claw your way up its arms to get at its vulnerable face rather than using a ballista. If you're successful here you'll be flung across the harbour again into a narrow hallway, but it doesn't take long before the glowing blue eye of the colossus is peering in at you through the nearest window and the whole building is shaking, moving, falling... end demo.

Need. More. Now. **Luke Reilly**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...it's rare that a sequel equals, let alone eclipses the original... I always said that *God of War* was my dream game, well no longer, *God of War II* really is the game I've always wanted to play."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Us too

CLASH OF THE TITANS

We all know Kratos is hard, but how does he stack up against the toughest of Hollywood tough guys?

KRATOS VS. T-800

The Terminator is hardy but, for a guy who took down a god, a robot shouldn't pose too much of a problem. He won't be back.

Result: Kratos

KRATOS VS. ROCKY

Coaxed out of retirement for the fifth time, Rocky has the heart but not the mettle. Kratos sends the Italian Stallion to the glue factory.

Result: Kratos

KRATOS VS. CHUCK NORRIS

Out of mutual respect for one another they choose not to fight, instead setting up a foundation for men who can't grow decent beards.

Result: Draw

PS3 **PS2** PSP

PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** SPORTS
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **DEVELOPER:** CLAP HANZ
- **WEB:** au.playstation.com

■ Beach tennis – a bit like beach cricket, only you use a tennis ball... Actually, that bit is exactly the same as beach cricket

EVERYBODY'S TENNIS

Swapping clubs for racquets, but keeping the bobble heads

Sony's *Everybody's Golf* series has been hitting the virtual links since its debut on the PSone, attracting both golf fans and non-fans alike over the years via its extremely accessible control set, exaggerated cartoon styling and cheeky sense of humour. Now Japanese developer Clap Hanz has turned its attention to the sport of tennis, aiming to create a serve and volley game that's a bit like a glue-covered midget – easy to pick up and impossible to put down – and thus making it suitable for well, everybody (there's certainly no irony in the title, unlike *Everybody Love's Raymond*).

Of course, as far as we're concerned such a game already exists. *Virtua Tennis* has already reached the pinnacle of the genre, combining an absolutely flawless control system with incredible physics and now, with *Virtua Tennis 3* on PS3, stunningly lifelike visuals. *VT* is essentially the Roger Federer of the tennis game genre – a master of all aspects of the sport, and sure to be considered the greatest of all time.

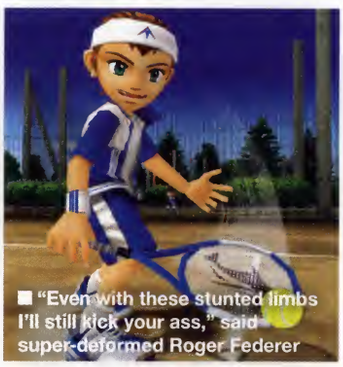
But full credit to Clap Hanz, because *Everybody's Tennis* is shaping up to be a fun little tennis experience in its own right. Seasoned *VT* pros might feel a little awkward at first when they pick up the controller – rather than holding down the button to charge your shots up in advance, *Everybody's Tennis* relies purely on the timing of your button presses for the best results. If you're too late or too early on the shot, the less power you put into it and the greater the chance you have of spraying it long or wide. In typical Clap Hanz style you get a little speech bubble above your head after each shot – nail it and you get a musical note, swing too early a picture of a hare and swing too late a picture of a tortoise. It's a system that's both cute and instructional, like that student teacher you had a crush on in Year 7.

Speaking of cuteness, *Everybody's Tennis* is crammed with sickeningly adorable little touches. For example, sometimes when you really smack a passing shot a mole will pop up out of the ground where the ball has landed, with a fresh bandaid on its noggin. Really get hold of a smash and you're treated with a comic book-style 'THWACK!' printed across the screen, and occasionally a wayward soccer ball will be kicked from a neighbouring field and roll across the court in the middle of a point. It certainly can't be accused of taking itself too seriously.

Although not nearly as technically impressive as *Virtua Tennis*, *Everybody's Tennis* is still shaping up to be an enjoyably lighthearted take on the sport – endowed with far more personality than its Sega rival, and packing depth that belies its simple appearance. If indeed *VT* is the Roger Federer of the tennis game genre, then *Everybody's Tennis* could well be the Maria Sharapova – cute in appearance but packing an unexpected amount of grunt. Sounds ace. **Tristan Ogilvie**

INFO BYTE

Clap Hanz is interested in developing games for other sports, like Everybody's Soccer, Everybody's Weightlifting and Everybody's Uncoordinated (endorsed by the English cricket team).



■ "Even with these stunted limbs I'll still kick your ass," said super-deformed Roger Federer

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ ""We had some experienced tennis players try the game, and they said it's 'close to actual tennis'".

WHAT WE SAY:

■ We think those players lied about their levels of tennis experience. Regardless, the game seems like a great deal of fun.

40-LOVE... UM, WHAT?

Ever wondered how the sport of tennis ended up with such a wacky scoring system? Like for example, why do you get 15 for the first two points in a game, but only 10 for the third? As it turns out, tennis scoring is derived from medieval numerology, and back then the number 60 was considered a 'complete' number, in much the same way we consider 100 a nice round figure today. Thus in the medieval version of tennis, games were scored at 15, 30, 45 and 60. The 45 has since been rounded down to 40 for no apparent reason. So how come when you haven't scored anything at all, you've got 'love'? We're not sure, but we do know that The Beatles reckoned "all you need is love" – so clearly they never won at tennis.

■ "Fore!" shouted the first-time tennis player

ANiMEBLiTZ

ON DVD VIDEO NOW

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All-new action from Gonzo (HELLSING, LAST EXILE)

Unbeatable gunman Train "Black Cat" Heartnet is the 13th assassin of the secret society Chronos. After meeting Saya, a bounty hunter or "sweeper", Train leaves Chronos and starts a new life as a sweeper, collecting bounties with his partner Sven. However, Train's past is haunting him around every corner...

After 20 years, Robotech is back with a vengeance!

After years of strife between the human race and the Invid, the war reaches an unexpected conclusion. Freed from conflict, the people of Earth embark on an expedition in search of Admiral Rick Hunter's missing fleet. Meanwhile, a deadly new adversary threatens the expedition.

ROBOTECH THE SHADOW CHRONICLES

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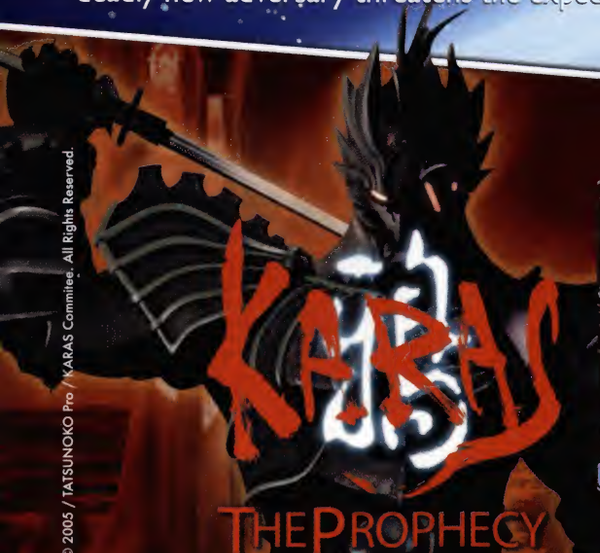

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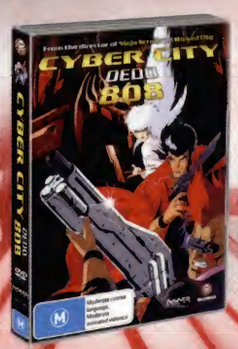
Amazing 3D CG visuals and stunning 6.1 sound

Tokyo is thrown into disarray as a former Karas attempts to seize power and bring order to the streets using force. A newly risen Karas stands in its way - will the new Karas succeed or will the two destroy all of humanity?

Hard-boiled cyberpunk action from the director of NINJA SCROLL

In a future plagued by murderers and thieves, three convicts-turned-cops stand guard over the innocent. They strive to reduce their sentences by hunting fellow criminals. If they fail or attempt escape, their booby-trapped collar will explode!



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WORDS: NARAYAN PATTISON

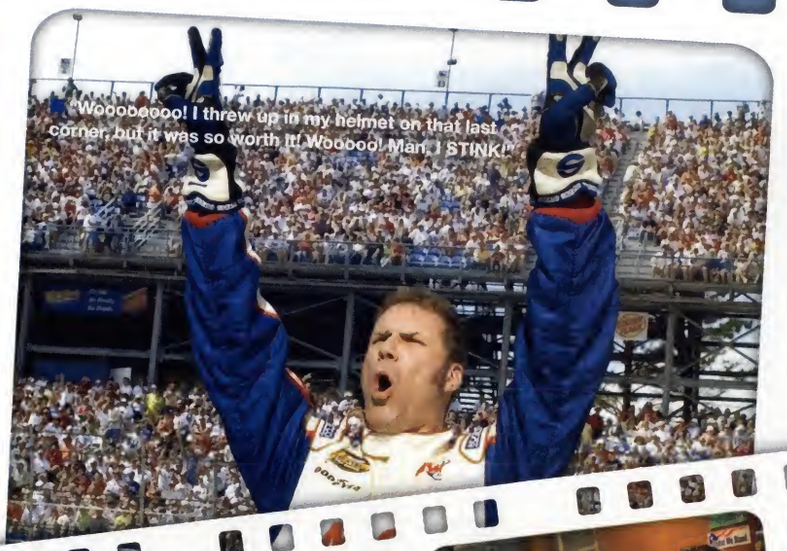
INTO THE BLU

Since your PS3 doubles as a Blu-ray player, there's no time like the present to learn about the next generation of DVD

MOVIES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

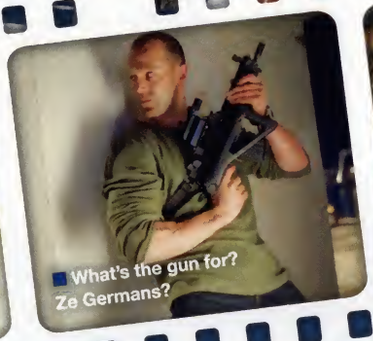
Below is a list of some of the best flicks currently on store shelves. More than 50 titles are planned to be available by the PS3's March 23 launch date.

50 First Dates
Corpse Bride
The Departed
Enter the Dragon
Fantastic Four
The Fugitive
Full Metal Jacket
Gone in 60 Seconds
Goodfellas
The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
Hostel
Ice Age 2
Kiss Kiss Bang Bang
Kung Fu Hustle
The Last Samurai
The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen
Lethal Weapon 1 & 2
Mission Impossible I-III
Rocky
Sky High
S.W.A.T.
Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby
The Transporter
Underworld: Evolution
X-Men: The Last Stand
xXx



"Wooooooo! I threw up in my helmet on that last corner, but it was so worth it! Wooooo! Man, I STINK!"

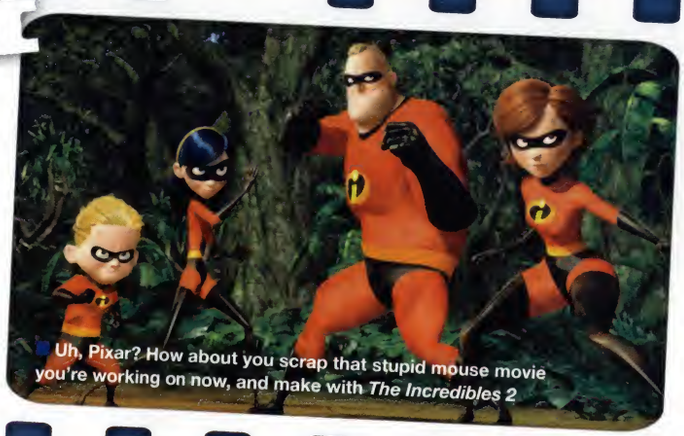
"Hi, I'm comedian Adam Sandler" "You're a comedian? Since when?"



What's the gun for? Ze Germans?

"More like Di Crap-rio!" BIFF!

300 – so hot right now



Uh, Pixar? How about you scrap that stupid mouse movie you're working on now, and make with *The Incredibles 2*

COMING SOON

While there's a solid line-up of flicks already available, it's the titles planned for later in 2007 that have us re-watching our DVDs in anticipation. Here's a sample of some of the crackers we're hanging for: *Spider-Man* 1-3, *Terminator* 1-3, *Pirates of the Caribbean* 1-3, *300*, *The Incredibles* and *The Matrix* (just 1, not 2 or 3 – they totally sucked).

What's so good about Blu-ray that would make you choose to watch movies on it rather than DVD? Unlike the jump from VHS to DVD, it's true the differences between DVD and Blu-ray are not as night-and-day noticeable as they were in the first switch to digital movies.

There are a number of tech specs that we'll cover shortly, but essentially movies on Blu-ray look and sound significantly better than DVD, especially for those people with HDTVs and good surround sound setups.

Thanks to Blu-ray's 50GB storage (compared to DVD's 8.5GB) it's possible to view movies in an eyeball-searingly sharp 1080p (six times the resolution of DVDs) and assault your ears with explosive 7.1 surround sound.

If you want to experience true cinema-quality movies in your home then Blu-ray is clearly the way to go. While most unlucky consumers have to fork out $1,000-2,000 for Blu-ray movie players, you've got one bundled in free with your sexy new PS3. If you're still sceptical about the benefits of Blu-ray, you can try before you buy because the first 20,000 PS3 owners score a free copy of the action-packed new release Blu-ray movie, *Casino Royale*.

WORDS: NARAYAN PATTISON

FORCE POWER

LucasArts is pioneering the use of literally ground-breaking tech in *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* to recreate Jedi combat with unprecedented intensity and destruction.

How's this game concept sound? You play Darth Vader's secret apprentice, unleashing your out of control Force powers in a fully destructible world as you and Vader exterminate the remaining Jedi during the mysterious years between *Star Wars Episode III* and *IV*. Sounds bloody brilliant to us. Thankfully big George liked the concept too and gave LucasArts the green light to use its radically advanced tech to create the game *Star Wars* fans have been waiting 30 years to play.

GETTING THE GREEN LIGHT

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed began life as a handful of conceptual pre-visualisation sequences showing what LucasArts planned to achieve with the game. When the developers nervously showed these pre-vis videos to George Lucas they were very relieved when he said "Go make that game!". The developers weren't nervous because of any lack of faith in the pre-vis concepts. They were worried George wouldn't go for the idea because they were taking Jedis and the Force into ambitious, uncharted territory. Their view involved Jedis using the Force as a far more violent and lethal weapon than even their lightsabres. *The Force Unleashed* sees Jedis tapping previously unheard of levels of Force power to ruthlessly and mercilessly obliterate their enemies.

There were two highlight scenes in the pre-vis videos that convey perfectly LucasArts' ambitious new direction. The first video sees a female Jedi wandering through a science lab when she's confronted by a pair of Stormtroopers. She uses what's later described by LucasArts as the "repulse Force power" to destroy everything around her in an explosion of telekinetic energy. Glass is shattered, metal is dented and torn apart and everything not nailed down, including the stormtroopers, is hurled away from her with tremendous concussive force.

The second pre-vis sequence is even more exciting. It sees a male Jedi catch a stormtrooper unawares. The stormtrooper is patrolling through a junkyard but before he knows what's happening, the Jedi has lifted him and a handful of junk parts around him into the air. After letting the stormtrooper flail and twist around in the air for a second, the Jedi slams him roughly into the ground. He then picks the stormtrooper up again and flings him against the side of a machine. Out of sheer desperation the stormtrooper clings to a part of the machine. The stormtrooper's grip is good enough to resist the Force for a couple of seconds before he and the two-metre section of the machine he was holding on to are torn free in an eruption of sparks and debris. Before the Jedi has decided how to finish off his floating stormtrooper he spies an attacking TIE Fighter swooping towards him. With a casual flick of his wrist he sends the stormtrooper and machine parts on a collision course with the TIE. A second later the TIE Fighter explodes spectacularly. The Jedi then uses a Force

jump to avoid the charred TIE wing that crashes violently into the ground where he was standing a split-second earlier. When LucasArts showed us the pre-vis there wasn't a person in the room who wasn't cheering madly after that finale.

EARTH-SHATTERING TECH

Now that George Lucas had given LucasArts his blessing to create the ambitious game, the team was faced with the daunting task of creating playable versions of the pre-vis sequences. The first hurdle LucasArts had to overcome was the limitations of current physics engines. The Havoc engine is great at handling the movement of pre-set objects but LucasArts soon realised it needed something far more advanced to handle the dynamic shattering, denting and deforming effects that *The Force Unleashed* required.

The answer is the radically advanced Digital Molecular Matter (DMM) engine. Rather than simply simulating set objects, DMM simulates every part of the environment down to the molecular level. LucasArts explained that in previous games where you could break objects it has usually been done by replacing the pristine object with a broken one the instant it's hit. This means the object will always break in the same way no matter how hard or by what other object it's hit by.

With DMM you get a completely different type of effect each time because the way every unique piece of metal bends and concrete shatters is being simulated in real-time. To show off the capabilities of the DMM engine LucasArts walked us through a test area of the game where various objects where set up on stands. The first type of matter was a simple plank of wood.

To illustrate the effect of a Force-push a squealing R2-D2 was flung against the wood plank. The plank bent at first, then the section R2 hit snapped off. LucasArts then explained that by simply thickening the plank you could get a completely different result. When flung against the thicker plank R2 merely cracked and splintered a small section of it, while the plank itself remained standing. It took another few attempts at throwing R2 against the thicker plank before it could finally be snapped in two.

The rest of this section of the tech demo saw R2 bending and denting metal objects and shattering crystal statues with surprising realism. The next object up for destruction was Jar Jar frozen in carbonite like the classic Han Solo scene. After denting the steel-like carbonite with a few well-aimed R2 tosses, LucasArts showed the versatility of the DMM engine by tweaking the carbonite's properties on the fly. Jar Jar's carbonite statue was quickly changed from metal to jelly. When this happened the statue instantly drooped and sagged under its own weight. When R2 was flung against the jelly Jar Jar the droid either bounced off or imbedded itself in the jelly, depending on the angle and the power of the throw.

FEELING EUPHORIC

Thanks to DMM LucasArts now had a way of simulating the effect of out of control Force powers in complex environments, but it still needed a new way to simulate the people you'd be using your powers on. To solve this problem LucasArts turned to its sister company Industrial Light and Magic (ILM), conveniently housed on the same campus in San Francisco.

For a number of years ILM had been

using a complex piece of software called Euphoria. This engine is called into play whenever computer graphics are used in a movie to simulate situations that are too dangerous to attempt with real stuntment. For example, if you've got a scene where a speeding semi trailer jackknifes through a crowd, you're unlikely to see many stuntment put their hands up. It's much easier to use Euphoria to simulate how they'd ineffectually try to duck and dodge before being sent cartwheeling through the air.

The Euphoria engine simulates bio-mechanical AI – in other words, a person's reflexes. LucasArts has redesigned the Euphoria engine from the pre-rendered software used by ILM into a real-time simulation engine with amazing results. Euphoria goes so much further than simple ragdoll animations. As well as reacting to impacts realistically characters in *The Force Unleashed* will take realistic action to help preserve themselves.

These self-preservation reflexes were demonstrated in a brief demo where crates were hurled at a running stormtrooper. He'd try to duck and dodge some crates and bat others to the side with his hands. If the crates were thrown low he'd even try to jump over them but would invariably get caught half-way and trip over them.

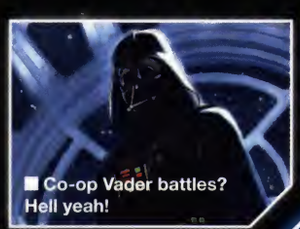
An even better Euphoria tech demo (combined with DMM) saw various stormtroopers being hurled around a large room. The first one landed back-first against a wooden beam in the roof, cracking it slightly as he bounced off painfully. The second was able to right himself better in the air and catch onto the beam with his right hand. The beam cracked even more but it held as he hung off it. Another couple of stormtroopers were thrown spectacularly to their deaths before one managed to grab hold of the hanging stormtrooper. They both hung there for a second before the weakened beam collapsed under the combined weight of the two stormtroopers. Normally a scene like this would only be possible as a scripted cut-scene but thanks to Euphoria and DMM everything described is simulated and happening randomly in real-time. The flailing bodies, the grabbing reflexes, the raised arms to instinctively protect their heads and the breakable scenery is all happening dynamically – and more importantly, with no need to be animated in advance by the game's developers.

REVENGE OF THE SITH

With the earth-shattering tech firmly in place it was time to flesh out the plot and gameplay of what's being treated very seriously by LucasArts as the next chapter in the *Star Wars* saga. The time

JEDI DUELS

One very interesting revelation was that *The Force Unleased* will feature a multiplayer mode. Our absolute dream scenario is two-player online co-op through the main game with you and Vader fighting side-by-side. This would be especially cool if, as we suspect, James Earl Jones has signed on to voice Vader.



■ Co-op Vader battles? Hell yeah!

between *Star Wars Episode III* and *IV* offers an almost limitless playground for LucasArts to construct its game in. During this period Darth Vader and the Empire rise to power and the Rebel Alliance is formed. There's also great potential for amazing action scenes as Darth Vader, and you as his apprentice, track down and exterminate the remaining Jedi masters. Who knows, we may even see some very cool cameos from Han and Chewie, or Obi-Wan, or perhaps the grand master Yoda before he settles into his retirement on Dagobah.

Don't expect being Darth Vader's apprentice to be anything like the love and cuddles affair Luke received under Obi Wan and Yoda. There'll be no pussy-assed "Mmm… in this backpack, put me. My magic green hands, backrub give you. Mmm… Yes?" nonsense on Vader's watch. No, sir.

Your character (who LucasArts has oddly chosen not to name yet) looks very much like he's graduated from the Jedi school of hard knocks. It's not all lightsabre canings and Force-powered nipple cripples for the young apprentice though, he does also get to adopt a droid sidekick and enjoy a steamy love affair with the saucy female Imperial pilot Juno Eclipse. He even gets his own pimped out spaceship, the Rogue Shadow. Being down with the dark side doesn't seem half bad.

Much of the plot is still veiled in secrecy but we do know about a few of the locations visited in the game. One planet you'll rampage through will be the junk world, Raxus Prime. This planet was first introduced in the *Clone Wars* videogame but also later used in *Star Wars* comics. The nature of the planet is perfectly suited to both your Force powers and the DMM engine.

Another confirmed location is the Willy Wonka-esque mushroom planet Felucia. This planet was first seen in *Episode III* when the female Jedi was shot during the 'lets have stacks of Jedi masters effortlessly killed by a handful of normally useless stormtroopers' montage. This planet is also home to a bizarre looking humanoid life-form with gecko-like suckers for hands. Sucks to be them…

GAME ON

After all the build-up it was finally time to see the game itself in action. The level we witnessed takes place on a TIE construction facility, hovering above a nearby planet. Darth has sent his apprentice to eliminate the Jedi hiding there, and leave no witnesses. This gives you a James Bond-style licence to kill as you ruthlessly exterminate Rebels and stormtroopers alike.

The level opens in a huge hangar bay, filled with equipment and has a series of TIEs travelling through the hangar on rails, clearly heading to some other part of the facility. The apprentice stands on a metal walkway with tens of enemies shooting at him. Even before he makes a move to attack them, the apprentice oozes cool. His lightsaber is held in an unorthodox stabbing position and he's casually using it and his other free hand to deflect the numerous laser bolts zapping at him.

When he does attack though, things really get crazy. He picks a stormtrooper up, fries him with a few blasts of lightning then flings the lifeless body slamming into another couple of enemies. After deflecting a few more laser bolts he lunges towards the next group of stormtroopers and defeats them easily with a few lightsaber slashes. For the next poor sucker in the distance he decides to get a little creative and lift him into the air before

UNLEASHED DOWN UNDER

Australia's very own Krome studio in Brisbane is currently coding away on the surprisingly impressive PS2 version of *The Force Unleashed*. On PS2 the DMM and Euphoria engines are not featured but your Force-powered rampage is still highly explosive. Using Havoc-simulated moveable objects and some old-fashioned destructible tech, each area is filled with items you can unleash your Force powers on. Running in 480p *The Force Unleashed* stands up surprisingly well against its big brother on PS3. One very cool scene in the PS2 game saw the apprentice tackle an AT-ST using a *God of War*-style button fatality to leap up on top of the AT-ST and plunge his lightsabre viciously into the cockpit.

■ **Although the earth-shattering DMM tech isn't in the PS2 game, Krome has still created plenty of amazing Jedi thrills**

killing him with a slick boomerang-style lightsaber toss.

Now it's on to the serious stuff. The apprentice detaches a passing TIE from its rail and sends it hurtling down 50 metres to land amongst another group of troopers on the hangar floor below. The resulting explosion knocks troopers and equipment in all directions.

Most of the squad of stormtroopers have been annihilated already but there are still a few shooting at him from a walkway a hundred metres away. He detaches another TIE and flings it effortlessly in their direction and we get the first real taste of the DMM and Euphoria engines earning their keep. The TIE obliterates a couple of the walkway's support struts. The walkway shudders and tilts dangerously, causing some stormtroopers to be thrown over the side, while others are able to grab hold of rails or maintain their balance with difficulty. It wasn't long though before the entire walkway tore free of its roof mounts and sent the remaining troopers plunging to their death.

Door switches are clearly beneath the likes of apprentice Siths. As the apprentice carved a path of destruction through the facility he would merely gesture at the foot-thick blast doors and watch them tear and buckle as he flung them away, and, more often than not, right into any poor suckers in the next room.

The brief demo ended in an immense docking port where streams of TIE Fighters flew overhead. Countless more Rebels and stormtroopers died during the apprentice's onslaught, either electrocuted, slashed with a lightsaber or flung to their deaths. In a very classy touch the LucasArts representative playing the game finished the demo with a homage to the original pre-vis by flinging a stormtrooper into one of the speeding TIE Fighters, causing it to erupt in an explosion of debris.

THE FORCE IS STRONG

It was impossible not to be impressed with *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*. LucasArts has taken what we've previously seen of Jedi battles in the *Star Wars* films and ramped it up to insane new levels. You definitely get a sense of being a supremely powerful Sith lord on a merciless rampage.

As always we had some minor gripes. For the most part the DMM technology was restricted to objects within the rooms, with the floor, walls, roofs and people remaining indestructible. In a clear bid to emphasis your Force powers, the game's lightsaber has also been toned down significantly. It only serves to damage enemies and cannot be used to cleave bodies in two or cut through objects and environments.

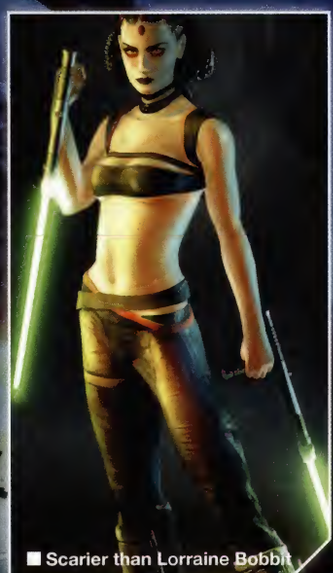
We realise that decapitating stormtroopers isn't possible within the teen-friendly rating LucasArts is banking on. We also understand that having a completely destructible world where you could use your lightsaber to carve through any wall would have been a nightmare for level designers and many other areas of development. Those realisations don't make us want it any less though.

Although we can't help but grumble that the revolutionary DMM tech has not been used to create the most ground-breaking gaming experience since *GTAIII*, that shouldn't take anything away from what LucasArts has achieved. Even in this early form *The Force Unleashed* has already surpassed every *Star Wars* game ever made and is well on the way to being one of the year's best titles. Prepare to unleash your inner Sith lord this November.

MOST IMPRESSIVE

You'd hardly be much of a Sith lord in training if you didn't face up against some worthy Jedi masters. One thing George Lucas was adamant about with the game was that LucasArts needed to invent brand new characters in the *Star Wars* universe. Whether or not Darth and his apprentice square off against Obi Wan and Yoda remains to be seen but there's a good range of fresh Jedi talent that has been created for your opponents. The most fearsome is a grizzled Jedi General. It's odd that such a clearly experienced war hero played no part in the events of *Episodes I-III*, but we guess we can let that slide. The second Jedi revealed was a lithe female with twin lightsabres sprouting out of what look very similar to police knightsticks.

■ Mace Windu's his bitch

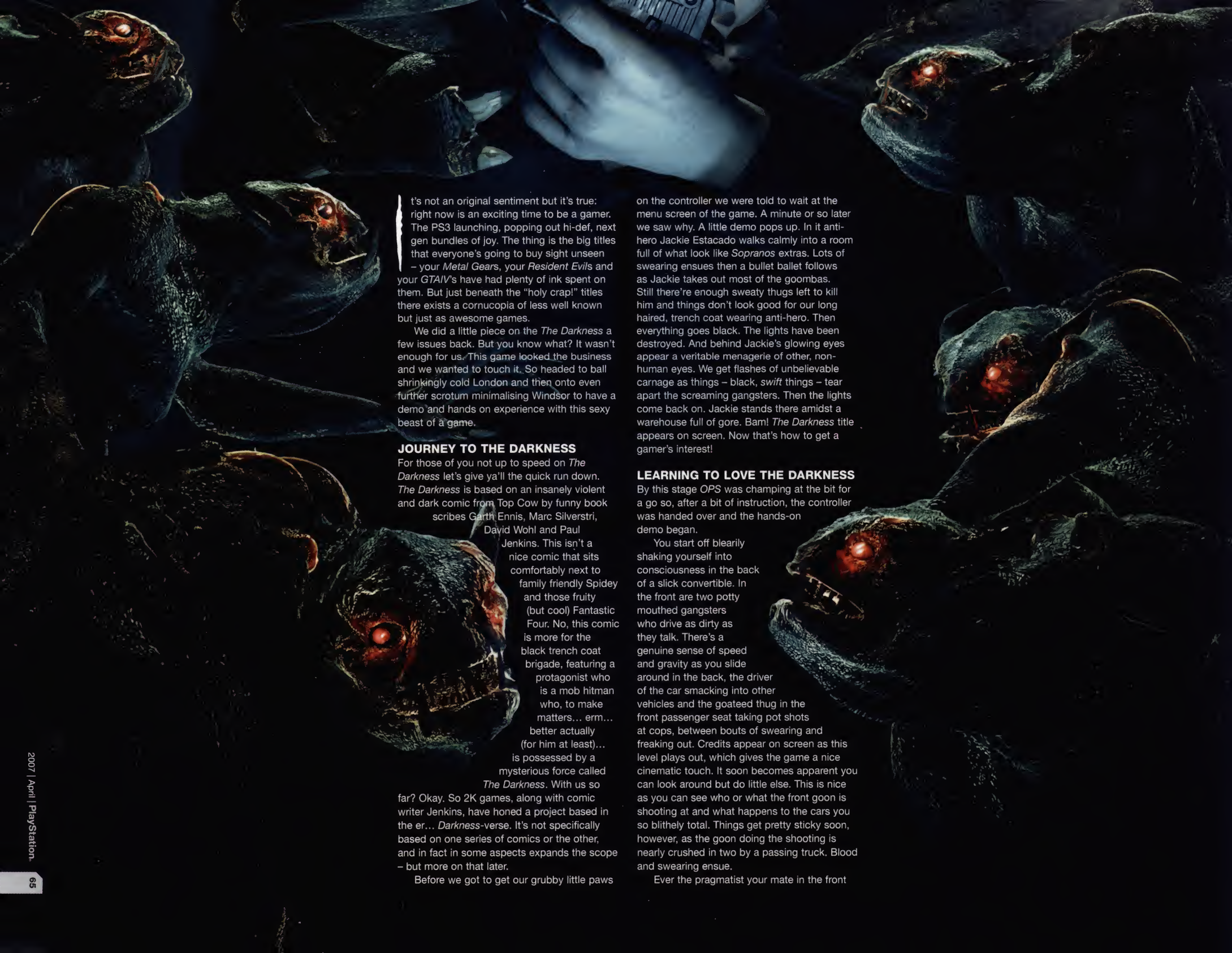


■ Scarier than Lorraine Bobbit

WORDS: ANTHONY O' CONNOR

AFRAID OF THE DARK

We travel half way across the world to brave *The Darkness*. Read on...



It's not an original sentiment but it's true: right now is an exciting time to be a gamer. The PS3 launching, popping out hi-def, next gen bundles of joy. The thing is the big titles that everyone's going to buy sight unseen – your *Metal Gear*s, your *Resident Evil*s and your *GTAIV*'s have had plenty of ink spent on them. But just beneath the "holy crap!" titles there exists a cornucopia of less well known but just as awesome games.

We did a little piece on the *The Darkness* a few issues back. But you know what? It wasn't enough for us. This game looked the business and we wanted to touch it. So headed to ball shrinkingly cold London and then onto even further scrotum minimalising Windsor to have a demo and hands on experience with this sexy beast of a game.

JOURNEY TO THE DARKNESS

For those of you not up to speed on *The Darkness* let's give ya'll the quick run down. *The Darkness* is based on an insanely violent and dark comic from Top Cow by funny book scribes Garth Ennis, Marc Silverstri, David Wohl and Paul Jenkins. This isn't a nice comic that sits comfortably next to family friendly Spidey and those fruity (but cool) Fantastic Four. No, this comic is more for the black trench coat brigade, featuring a protagonist who is a mob hitman who, to make matters... erm... better actually (for him at least)... is possessed by a mysterious force called *The Darkness*. With us so far? Okay. So 2K games, along with comic writer Jenkins, have honed a project based in the er... *Darkness*-verse. It's not specifically based on one series of comics or the other, and in fact in some aspects expands the scope – but more on that later.

Before we got to get our grubby little paws on the controller we were told to wait at the menu screen of the game. A minute or so later we saw why. A little demo pops up. In it anti-hero Jackie Estacado walks calmly into a room full of what look like *Sopranos* extras. Lots of swearing ensues then a bullet ballet follows as Jackie takes out most of the goombas. Still there're enough sweaty thugs left to kill him and things don't look good for our long haired, trench coat wearing anti-hero. Then everything goes black. The lights have been destroyed. And behind Jackie's glowing eyes appear a veritable menagerie of other, non-human eyes. We get flashes of unbelievable carnage as things – black, *swift* things – tear apart the screaming gangsters. Then the lights come back on. Jackie stands there amidst a warehouse full of gore. Bam! *The Darkness* title appears on screen. Now that's how to get a gamer's interest!

LEARNING TO LOVE THE DARKNESS

By this stage *OPS* was champing at the bit for a go so, after a bit of instruction, the controller was handed over and the hands-on demo began.

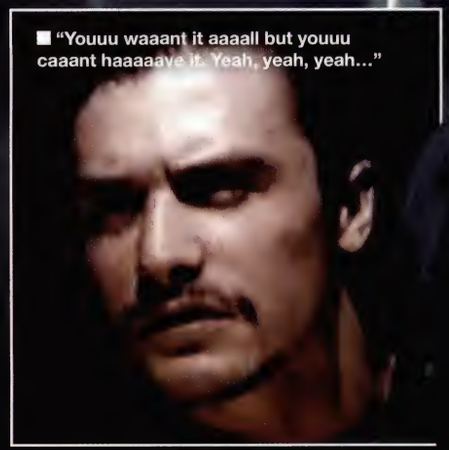
You start off blearily shaking yourself into consciousness in the back of a slick convertible. In the front are two potty mouthed gangsters who drive as dirty as they talk. There's a genuine sense of speed and gravity as you slide around in the back, the driver of the car smacking into other vehicles and the goateed thug in the front passenger seat taking pot shots at cops, between bouts of swearing and freaking out. Credits appear on screen as this level plays out, which gives the game a nice cinematic touch. It soon becomes apparent you can look around but do little else. This is nice as you can see who or what the front goon is shooting at and what happens to the cars you so blithely total. Things get pretty sticky soon, however, as the goon doing the shooting is nearly crushed in two by a passing truck. Blood and swearing ensue.

Ever the pragmatist your mate in the front

Tentacle porn at its finest... and darkest...
He's about to cop the mother of all turkey slaps...
"I friggin' love you!"
"I friggin' love YOU!"
His beard was black right up until now (his underpants used to be white too)

MIKE PATTON IS ONE SCARY MELON FARMER!

The first time we heard Mike Patton utter the words "I AM INSIDE YOU" we shivered a little. No, not because we think of him in that way – it's because his voice is goddam scary. Not over-the-top theatricality like the dude who did Doc Doom in *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* but true, guttural evil. We asked how they managed to pull off such a unique sounding voice effect and they answered: "We didn't." Apparently Patton's one request was that his voice would not be messed with at all. So when you hear *The Darkness* speak, that's pure Mike Patton. Damn, that's one spooky dude.



■ "Youuu waaant it aaaall but youuu caaant haaaaave it. Yeah, yeah, yeah..."

seat tells you to take point and blow some punks away. With all the gravitas of goldfish's funeral you boot the artist formerly known as alive out of the car and take control. You have what can only be described as a formidable looking shotgun and you'll need it as things are about to get hairy. Dudes are shooting at you, cops are chasing you and in a moment that will probably make even the most hardened gamer yelp like a scalded kelpie – some dude jumps on the hood. You quickly pump round after round into him and his bloody, rag doll corpse flips over the side. Nice.

Things aren't all gut shots and dodging however as the car runs afoul of a building site and crashes. Everything goes black. Again.

THAT WAS THE INTRO LEVEL

We should stop for a moment here and mention something we don't like about FPS (First Person Shooters, for the initially challenged). It's that whenever anything cool happens like you find a new weapon or a beast bursts through a wall (yes, we're looking at you *Resistance: Fall of Man*) you stay in the same first person perspective. Not so with *The Darkness*. As you shamble over to the dying driver of the car. He yaks on for a bit (hell, he's dying, let the man ramble) and then hands you two pistols. The game switches to third person mode as we see Jackie get the guns, weigh them in his hands and look all moody and stuff. Okay, it's a little thing but this is carried on throughout the entire game: mini-movies to underline the importance of certain moments. There's nothing worse than being in an FPS and missing a cool animation because you were facing the wrong way or trying to see what happens when you shoot friendlies (yeah, we do that too – and for the record in *The Darkness* you can and it's fun!).

So now you have two guns, one controlled by each trigger finger. It takes some getting used to at first but after a few cracks at it you'll be pulling off John Woo moves left and right. Now you have to make your way through the building site. There's a bunch of faux builders hanging about ready to riddle you with bullet holes and as you haven't got your Darkness powers yet – it's best to go slow. A nice feature is the way as you round a corner you can have one gun up ready to shoot high and the other down low for closer enemies. The physics just feel right.

Enemies will pop out at you and it's best to try and get them in the head or the heart as some folks take quite a lot of shooting. An awesome feature is the execution move. If you manage to get close enough to your enemy and press fire one of many execution kills is erm... executed. We saw: grabbing your enemy's head and twisting his neck until it breaks (nice), kneeing your enemy in the face and shooting him in the head after he goes down (very nice), pistol whipping the enemy like they saved over your *Final Fantasy XII* save (grrrr!) and finally our favourite – grabbing the enemy, putting the gun in his mouth and blowing the back of his head off. Oh yes, when they called this game *The Darkness* they weren't piss farting about. This is a heavy game. And it gets heavier.

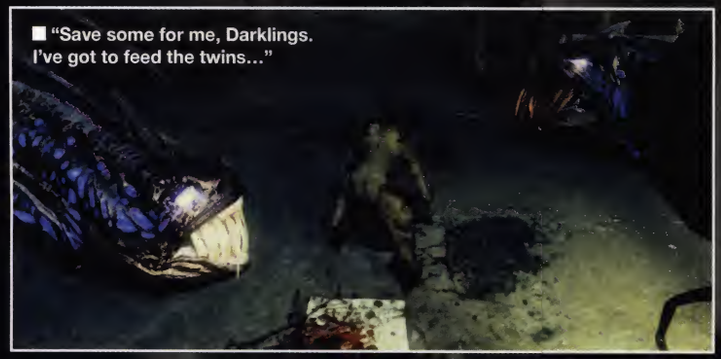
There was some confusion in earlier articles (which is why we went overseas to see it up close and personal) about whether Jackie was voiced by Mike Patton (Faith No More, Mr. Bungle, the bloke your girlfriend would drop you in a nano-second for) or whether he voiced The Darkness as a separate entity – or you were one and the same. We can reveal now that Jackie is not in fact The Darkness – that's Mike Patton's role. And he starts whispering sweet horrors into your ears as your make your way through the building site into a graveyard. The gate's been blocked by a car and there are goons amongst the headstones. After taking out the goons - and giggling during the execution kills (hey, you will too when you see them. They rock!) we found ourselves at an impasse. So we toddled down into a murky little toilet area and spoke to one of the first NPC's. You can actually talk to these characters with a list of questions and then shoot them. Or not. However talking to them can lead to side quests and other hitman-style missions.

Yes, that's right in a merging of styles like *GTA* meets *Resistance,* you don't necessarily have to follow a pre-ordained path to the finish. You can stop smell, shoot and eat the roses along the way – giving the game a fair sack of replayability. What are the benefits of these side missions? 2K was a little closed mouthed about that but apparently you can increase your Darkness powers after a twist involving a certain family member betraying you.

EVIL... IT MAKES ME FEEL ALIVE!

Now we're not sure if you get all these powers at this point in the game, or if they were given to us to demonstrate the lot of them at once – but we're here to tell you what we had. First up two serpent heads appear either side of Jackie's own noggin'. These can be used to lash out at enemies or sent on missions snaking down drains or through areas too small for humans. They also fight each other and start hissing with impatience if you stay still for too long. Which wasn't a problem as a whole new horde of enemies was shooting at us. Not only could we use our guns, but if we stuck to the shadows – where thanks to our new powers we can see in the dark – we sent tentacle-like tendrils out to pick up and slam enemies against the ground until they looked like mafia mince. You can also summon a vortex that sends everyone flying all over the joint (usually to a fatal landing). And then there's the Darklings. After you stand over the corpses of your enemies you need to feed your serpent-headed chums. Their food of choice? Human hearts.

So after they gulp down the tickers of various gangsters – with a disturbingly realistic animation – you can summon



■ "Save some for me, Darklings. I've got to feed the twins..."

■ "You picked the wrong guy to mug, pal..."

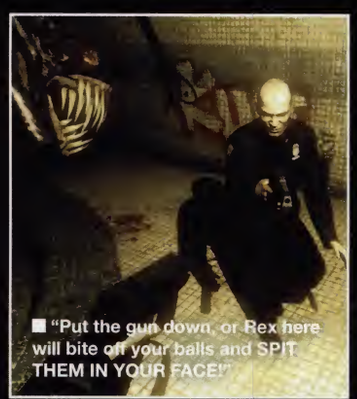
Darklings at certain points as long as you've destroyed all light nearby with the tentacles or bullets. We did this and a giggling, capering gremlin-looking beastie clambered up the wall and moved the car that was blocking the gate. We then moved down to the train station where a gangster scumbag blew our darkling away (bah!) and made insults involving our (well, Jackie's) mother. This would not stand. However as he was behind a locked door, what to do? It soon became clear. We'd send one of the serpent heads in the nearby air vent. The feeling of slithering up on one's prey like a speedy anaconda was quite liberating, especially the look of terror before we ripped him to shreds and he dropped the key. And internal organs.

We sent our happily sated serpent back to Jackie and unlocked the door. At this point the controller was taken away from us and we were given a glimpse of a part of the game no one in Australia has seen: the Otherworld.

It doesn't feature in the comics, it's a totally new arena for *The Darkness* and it explains the origins of The Darkness. Maybe. Squeezing information out of 2K about the Otherworld was like asking a piglet to beat-box: amusing but ultimately fruitless. We were told, "when you find out, you won't regret that you didn't know. We wish we didn't know! It's very cool." We're inclined to believe it. The whole zone looks like a WWI battle – with mortar shells exploding, kamikaze pilots and enemy zombie uh, soldier things.

Your modern weapons don't translate into this weird realm. You'll have to use the kind of guns featured in the era – like rifles and Lugers. After you fight your way through enemy trenches and across no man's land you'll find yourself in, for want of a better word, an allied trench. See, no one can die in this hellish Otherworld. So allied soldiers are blown up and have to stitch themselves together to fight another day. What does this all mean? What does it have to do with a New York hitman with mysterious powers? We're dying to find out.

Anyway, an allied soldier, stitched up and seeping from untreated wounds tells Jackie he needs to go to the village. Cool! Let's see what new horrors we can scrute there... but no. The hours had flown by and the demo was over. But as they say in showbiz, "Always leave them wanting more" – and that's just what they did. So, to recap:



■ "Put the gun down, or Rex here will bite off your balls and SPIT THEM IN YOUR FACE!"

PROS

Loved the switching of first person to third person camera for "hero" moments. Dug the variety of Darklings, as they are created from the darkness of a person's soul – the Darkling retains certain traits of their formerly human shell. Thought the Otherworld looked awesome and apparently it makes up about a third of the game with various grimy alleys, buildings and other areas of New York making up the other two thirds. There aren't boss battles per se because essentially you are the evil, the "big bad" – however there is a defined plot with a proper ending and lots of twists to give the punter a much more fulfilling experience than your average gun-happy adventure. Human weapons will never be crazy big. You'll get shotguns, hand guns, Uzis and so forth but not rocket launchers. This isn't that kind of game. As soon as you run out of ammo for your gun, you chuck it and pick up the next one. It's also more puzzle based than your average FPS – however as most of these puzzles involve spattering enemies we were cool with that. Also there will be multiplayer, with players given the option to be darklings, humans or whatever strikes your fancy. The game modes were mostly standard, but there were a few that sounded downright awesome – like being the only human amongst a horde of Darklings.

CONS

Few if any, to be honest. With a tentative release date of "Australian autumn" any glitches of slow-down that occurred will likely be ironed out. We would have liked to have seen some huge beasties to take down, but then we're boss fight junkies. No, ultimately, *The Darkness* is shaping up to be the sleeper hit of the year.

IN DARKNESS WE TRUST

It takes elements of survival horror without the horrible camera angles and stupid 'blue key for blue door' puzzles, it has the dark, nihilism of the comic intact, and the sheer joy of picking up a cop car and flinging it at your enemies with your huge, black, tentacle or watching a Darkling swear and kick stuff has to be experienced firsthand. Plus its unique gameplay mechanics allow for plenty of combat situations. Do you shoot out all the lights then go in with your guns out, or shower your foes with Darklings and enjoy the carnage from afar? The choices are up to you and frankly we cannot wait to get our meaty digits on this puppy when it's done. This year we reckon *The Darkness* is the new *Black*.

THE OTHERWORLD IS OUT OF THIS WORLD... BABY!

Bathed in sepia tones the Otherworld is a nightmarish place. The term "worse than Hell" was bandied about more than once in the 2K office. Man, we'll go one further, this place was worse than Rooty Hill! Planes spiraling out of the skies, undead soldiers putting themselves together (literally) and a secret that somehow involves your family, an ancient evil and a non-linear view of time (we think, that last bit was kind of a guess) makes this perhaps the most intriguing part of the game. We even offered bribes of beer and sordid sexual acts to get the good oil. No dice. They're keeping this one close to their vests, and why the hell not? How good is it when a game genuinely surprises you?

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HELL ON EARTH

Michael Jackson could no longer deny the rumours about his plastic surgery addiction

WORDS: NICK O'SHEA

The master of terror, Clive Barker, brings a new nightmare to next gen

Bloody Hell

While he's already recognised as one of the most renowned horror writers of our time, Clive Barker considers himself far more than a novelist. Barker has brought his terrifying visions and twisted genius to the big screen, graphic novels and even the canvas, blurring the lines where reality ends and the nightmare begins. Soon, in collaboration with the Spanish development team Mercury Steam, Barker will unleash his next magnificent abomination, *Jericho*, upon the PlayStation 3, making all horror games before it look like nursery rhymes.

Signs of the Apocalypse

"And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them." - Revelation 11:7

While the Middle East is often an area of unrest and conflict, the city of Al Khali has suddenly become a site of vicious fighting, decimating the population and surrounds. All attempts to search for survivors or reconnaissance information have ended in tragedy, with local military, UN peacekeeping forces and international news teams alike vanishing without a trace.

Unbeknownst to most, the city of Al Khali was constructed on the remains of an ancient civilization which recklessly practised the dark arts, and in doing so unwittingly created rifts between dimensions and time that set all manner of unholy creatures from across the ages loose upon the world. When these unspeakable horrors hold sway, nothing truly dies, but instead will continue into unlife and thirst for destruction and the blood of the living. Unless stopped, the rebirth of Al Khali will unleash Armageddon upon the Earth.

The Faith of the Few

"For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." - Genesis 19:13

Throughout time, many brave souls have battled the hideous, supernatural entities that stream from Al Khali, but the primal force emanating from the ancient city is powerful beyond destruction. The best that can be hoped for is to suppress the dark energies through a ritual of banishment, and simply postpone the emergence of the evil that dwells beneath Al Khali.

Today, the US Government operates a top secret black-op organisation, comprised of gifted individuals to deal with paranormal situations. Their vast libraries of tomes about demons and the occult contain valuable information on the history of Al Khali, and the rituals that can banish its evil for another age. Armed with this knowledge, cutting edge modern weaponry and an array of stunning supernatural talents, the Jericho Team is sent in to seal Al Khali and prevent the imminent cataclysm from coming to pass.

"Holy crap, that's scary! My bowels are clenched so tight right now you could sharpen a pencil up my ass!"

A Blood-Soaked Saviour at the World's End

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." - Revelation 1:8

Jericho Team comprises of seven highly-trained operatives, each with abilities far beyond that of any crack troop. Each operative holds sway to their own unique psychic or paranormal ability and is lethal in their own right, let alone considering

■ "Oh, hey Skeletor. That stuff we said about you being a *She*-Man? We were totally kidding..."

■ "Yikes! I'm so scared my heart is playing the drum solo from Phil Collins' 'In the Air Tonight'..."

the combined might of the coordinated team. The Jericho Team is split into two squads, Alpha and Omega, with Captain Ross in command.

Alpha Team

Cpl. Simone Cole

Possessing an almost immeasurable intellect and aided by a portable, gesture-operated supercomputer, Cole is able to bend the very fabric of reality. This includes the ability to create temporal bubbles that manipulate the flow of time. On top of this astounding feat, Cole is a tactical genius and expert in conventional warfare.

Cpl. Xavier Jones

Blessed (though some might say cursed) with a second sight, Jones can see between layers of reality and witness things that no one else can. His extrasensory perception extends beyond the present, and can even catch fleeting images of past and future events.

Lt. Abigail Black

Black's accuracy with a sniper rifle is unrivalled, partly due to her world-class marksmanship, but also the fact that she can guide her bullets with pinpoint accuracy using her finely honed skills of telekinesis. Black can also use her telekinetic ability to create a force barrier to repel attacks, but such strenuous tasks take a heavy toll on her body, and have been known to cause internal hemorrhaging in extreme instances.

Omega Team

Sgt. "Billie" Church

Church's obsession with the occult led her to practise an ancient, forgotten arcane art. With an arsenal of spells and enchantments too numerous to mention, Church must fuel her magic by offering her own blood as sacrifice. Loathe to use modern weaponry, Church finds visceral close-quarters combat with her razor-sharp katana far more satisfying.

Sgt. Frank Delgado

Delgado dabbled in the dark arts extensively, and in his thirst for power summoned an ifrit (fire demon) and offered it his right arm as sacrifice for its servitude. Delgado's right arm is now a creature of living flame, and has to be encased in reinforced, radiation-shielded armour to protect his fellow squad members from its fiery wrath. Wielding a massive chain gun as well, Delgado is less a heavy weapons expert and more walking artillery.

Father Paul Rawlings

A man of the Church, Rawlings has studied white magics and demonology extensively, and is well versed in healing spells and exorcism. As well as his faith and studies, this padre has served in both Vietnam and the Gulf War, and is incredibly capable in combat, despite his age.

Captain Devin Ross

Ross' abilities are possibly the strangest of all. As well as a talent for clairvoyance, his powers allow him to combine the abilities of others. Psychically splicing together the essences of two squad mates, Ross can create some truly spectacular results.

One Hope in the Darkest Hour

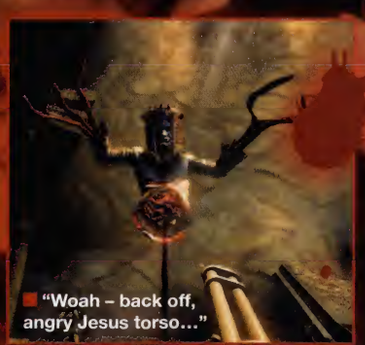
"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." - Revelation 2:10

Smashing together the squad-based action and horror genres, *Jericho* seems like '*Rainbow Six* goes to hell' and then some. As the Jericho Team descends into the depths of Al Khali, distortions in space-time will send the operatives through the many ages of the cursed city's emergences, forcing them to do battle with horrors from the ruins of the city in World War II, unholy knights from the 12th century's Crusades and even beasts from the taint's origin from many millennia ago.

There will also be a character-switching mechanic that gives you access to a vast array of weaponry and abilities at all times. While there is no word on any multiplayer aspects at this stage, we can't rule out that aspect either (it's pretty likely).

Mercury Steam is targeting a mid-year release, so enjoy your sweet dreams while you can, because you'll need a night light once *Cliver Barker's Jericho* hits PlayStation 3.

■ Telekinesis – who needs guns when you've got *mind* bullets?



■ "Woah – back off, angry Jesus torso..."

WORDS: JONTI DAVIS

DON'T DREAM IT'S OVER

Rather than nearing the end of its journey, *Final Fantasy XIII* proves SquareEnix has the skills and talent to make this a never-ending story.

There are stacks of blockbuster games in development for the PS3 – just think of *Grand Theft Auto IV*, *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*, *Gran Turismo 5*, *Ninja Gaiden Sigma*, *Resident Evil 5*, *Devil May Cry 4*, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, the list goes on and on and on. However, if we're talking epics, *Final Fantasy XIII* stands like a colossus over the rest of the field. To say we're looking forward to it is like saying that it was quite difficult to defeat Sephiroth in *Final Fantasy VII*. So, what do we have to look forward to from this Square Enix classic-in-the-making?

Interestingly, although Square Enix recently licensed the Unreal Engine 3 (used in games like *Rainbow Six Vegas*, *John Woo's Stranglehold* and *Turok*), *Final Fantasy XIII* has been developed using Square's own proprietary White Engine. Certainly from the footage released so far, it seems to have been a wise move. *FFXIII* looks like no other PS3 game we've seen – only *Virtua Fighter 5* and *Gran Turismo HD* have come close to its next-gen-ness to date. Of course, looks aren't everything, but *Final Fantasy XIII* also appears to have a sound and promising gameplay mechanic, based on the groundbreaking nature of this year's PS2 swansong, the real-time wonder that was *Final Fantasy XII*.

We sat down with the game's director, Motomu Toriyama, for a chat about the progress of *FFXIII* and found him to be in fine voice.

OPS: There are so many fans out there

FIGHTING SOLO?

Only a few battle scenes have been shown to the press so far, but Toriyama-san did recently confirm to Japanese magazine *Weekly Famitsu* that traditional team-based battles would occur in *FFXIII*. However, there will be many occasions when Lightning goes into battle without any backup. Presumably, other characters will also be playable in battle without assistance from party members. Exploration also seems to be split between solo and group-based adventure.

MORE THAN FANTASY

Just from looking at the new screens here, you can see that *Final Fantasy XIII* isn't only light years ahead of other titles in the series in a technical sense – it's also more futuristic in style. By Toriyama-san's admission, *Final Fantasy XIII* is "less fantasy than it is science fiction" and the game's distinctive visuals have been developed to progress the sci-fi themes of *FFVII* and *FFVIII*. Certainly, with the physical gap between Cocoon and Pulse, and the chance to journey between planets, *Final Fantasy XIII* is worlds away (if you'll pardon the pun) from the comparatively simple map-based exploits of past *Final Fantasy* games.

We don't know about you but we've got a thing for crazy, violent women. And capes. We *love* capes

waiting for *Final Fantasy XIII* and most of them will inevitably buy the game, but do you feel any pressure to deliver?

Motomu Toriyama: Whenever we develop a new *Final Fantasy* game for a new hardware format, we're very conscious to make use of the new console's key specifications and features, so there is definitely pressure to perform. With *Final Fantasy* on the PS3, we're particularly feeling that type of pressure.

OPS: With *Final Fantasy XIII* you've decided to spread the project over three titles, including one for mobile phones. What was the thinking behind that? Is there any particular objective?

MT: In fact, the *Fabula Nova Crystallis Final Fantasy XIII* project isn't just limited to three titles – there are many different aspects. In terms of the formats we're reaching, as well, it's not simply exclusive to the PS3 and mobile phones. In Latin, Fabula Nova Crystallis means "New Crystal Story" and we're using that as a base for the project, but there are many characters and legends that are branching off from this main story and universe. It's a huge project.

OPS: If we can move on to the battle systems in *Final Fantasy XIII*, how does the game play differently to previous *Final Fantasy* titles?

MT: The Active Timer Battle system of recent *Final Fantasy* games has been sped up to its limit in *Final Fantasy XIII*. It can't get any quicker than this. Compared with previous *Final Fantasy* games, the pace of battles in *Final Fantasy XIII* has been drastically increased, but we've still managed to retain the tactical and strategic characteristics of the series.

OPS: Could you tell us a little about some of the most interesting characters in *Final Fantasy XIII*?

MT: I can only really talk about Lightning at the moment. She's the main character, but in the game she's reluctant to talk about herself and her past, so there's a strong element of mystery about her character. The name 'Lightning' itself is just a tag she has chosen – it's actually not her real name. We're planning to talk about other characters in the near future, but we're deliberately revealing them in a certain order, so I'm afraid you'll just have to wait for more revelations.

OPS: How does *Final Fantasy XIII* utilise the PlayStation 3's key features – its Blu-ray disc format, the PlayStation Network, and so on?

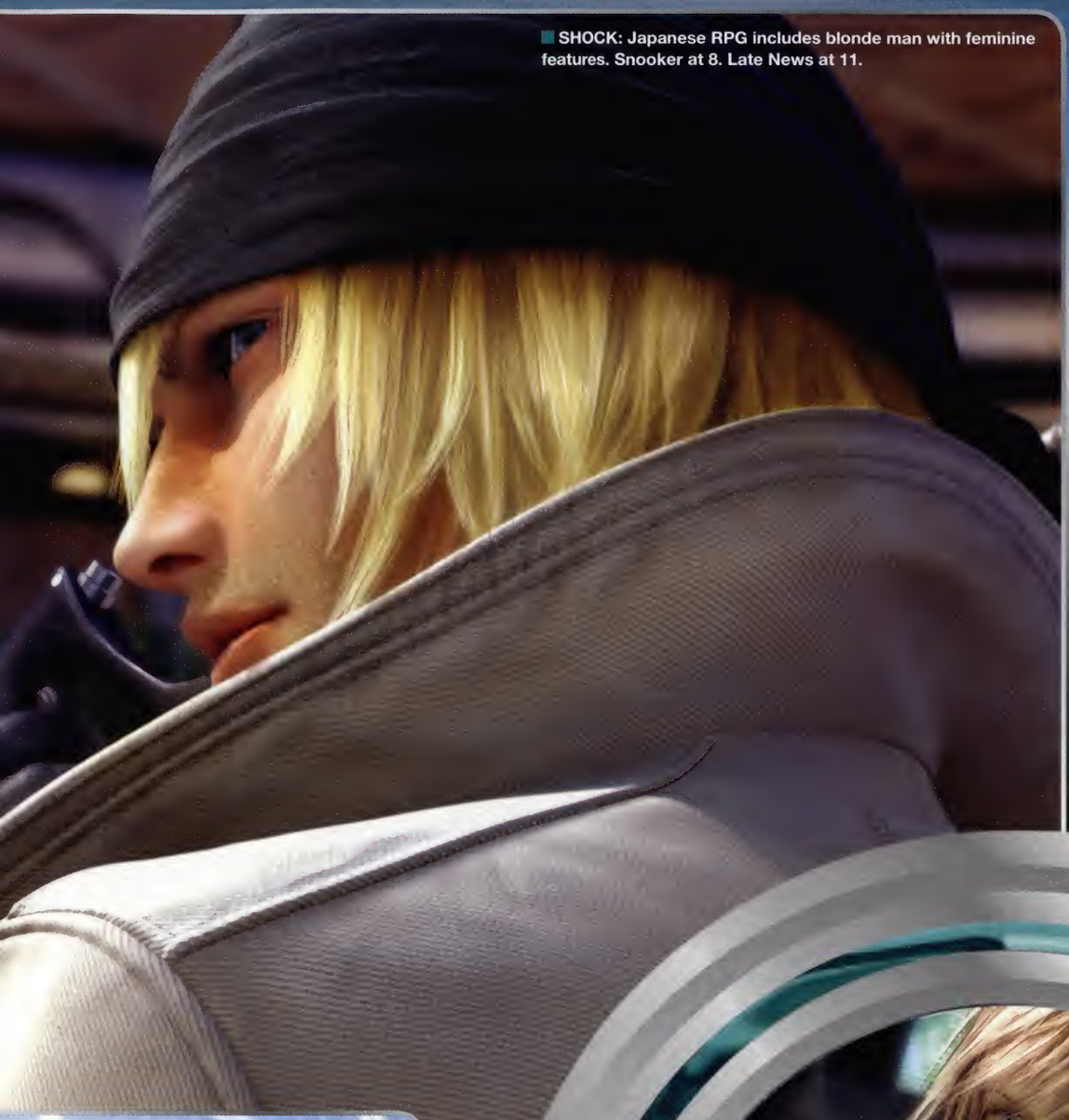
MT: The PS3's high-definition capabilities are really helping us to develop *Final Fantasy XIII*'s drama scenes with an extra sense of presence and impact. I think we'll be able to achieve a lot of things that were previously impossible; we're really creating a greater degree of expression as far as the game's characters are concerned, and we're also innovating with a split display to show what's happening in the game to different characters in different locations at the same time. We haven't decided whether or not to make use of the PS3's online functions, but we're thinking about it...

OPS: Are there likely to be any mini-games in *Final Fantasy XIII*?

MT: We're still debating over whether or not to include mini-games in the *Final Fantasy XIII* project, but if we were to develop mini-games in this universe we'd probably think about developing them into additional, separate releases – brand new games in their own right.

OPS: How long do you expect it to take

George Lucas is gonna sue somebody...



SHOCK: Japanese RPG includes blonde man with feminine features. Snooker at 8. Late News at 11.

a typical player to see the entirety of *Final Fantasy XIII*?

MT: Well, we want to maintain the volume of previous *Final Fantasy* games, so you can expect *Final Fantasy XIII* to be just as long.

OPS: And when can we expect to see *Final Fantasy XIII* released? We're dying to play it...

MT: Well, I'm afraid we still haven't set a release date.

OPS: Toriyama-san, thanks for your time.

It's clear from Motomu Toriyama's response that Square Enix is putting most of its weight into *Final Fantasy XIII*, and as he revealed, what was thought to be a trilogy is actually set to become even more expansive. We're particularly interested by the prospect of spin-off games, which may be a philistine thing to say, but *Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII* and *Dirge of Cerberus* have shown that Square Enix can successfully diversify its leading series (and, of course, going further into the depths of Square Enix' back catalogue, *Brave Fencer Musashinden* and *Ergheiz* were also

LIGHTNING QUICK

Final Fantasy XIII's lead protagonist is one of the coolest *FF* characters since Cloud Strife. And just as Cloud had his own enormous blade, Lightning has a weapon to fear: the gunblade. Lightning also has a Gravity Bomb at her disposal, which can be used to quickly put up an electVrical shield as a defensive tactic in battle. Although he remains unnamed, one of Lightning's comrades was revealed at December's Jump Festa show in Tokyo. The blonde figure (pictured above) looks like a tough guy – he rides a motorbike, after all, and wears a bandana – and his role seems to be that of Lightning's bodyguard, as he often comes to her defence with his trusty gun. Other than these two playable characters, nothing is known about *Final Fantasy XIII*'s line-up.

WHITE MAGIC

We don't know a great deal about the magic spells available to *FFXIII*'s playable characters, but we do have some basic information that gives an impression of the direction the game is taking. As ever, elemental magic will play a big part in battles: Fire (based on flames), Blizzard (icy), Thunder (loud), and Aerial (strong winds). There's also a brand of magic called Firaga, which takes Fire magic to a further level, enabling simultaneous attacks against all enemies. In a more general sense, Lightning and her comrades will have four key options available to them in battle: Attack, Shoot (which makes use of Lightning's gunblade weapon), Defend, and V Strike (which can effect Overclock and Limit Hit specials).

great examples of Square's non-RPG-related abilities).

Battles are key as ever, and it's good to see that a real-time model (the Active Timer Battle system of *Final Fantasy XII*) has been adopted in *Final Fantasy XIII*. What Toriyama-san didn't go into, but which we're already informed about, is *Final Fantasy XIII*'s Overclock system. Overclock will enable the player in your control to 'go hyper', for want of a better term, once the circular gauge (pictured in the top-right corner of *Final Fantasy XIII* battle shots) is filled. And while your character (Lightning, initially) is in this state, he/she will be able to move much more quickly than usual while other characters in the field have their movements slowed to a crawl.

The game's setting is still largely under wraps, but from having been to the recent Jump Festa event in Tokyo we do know that much of the game will be set on a floating island called Cocoon. A separate world, used as a refuge for those who are evicted from Cocoon, is called Pulse. The game's plot seems to be more political than most *Final Fantasy* games, with a focus on how the government of Cocoon and Pulse is treating the citizens in its domain. Lightning and other controllable characters will no doubt spend much of their time fighting against the evil elements of this government.

The crystals mentioned in the *Fabula Nova Crystallis* titles also have a strong bearing on how the game progresses. Initially, there is an invasion of Cocoon by beings from Pulse, which leads to a quasi-revolution. Cocoon, as its name suggests, has developed into something of a haven from the ills of *Final Fantasy XIII*'s universe, leaving those outside of Cocoon in a dangerous environment. Crystals formed Cocoon, but it seems that Cocoon's strengths as a fortress are susceptible to infiltration and, more alarmingly for its inhabitants, the prospect that Cocoon could be dislodged from its position above the orbit of Pulse.

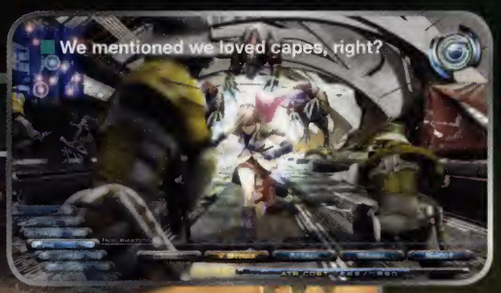
Although SquareEnix has stated that the various games that form *Fabula Nova Crystallis Final Fantasy XIII* are not directly related to each other, they do all occur in the same universe and share aesthetic similarities.

Final Fantasy Agito XIII is the mobile phone title in the series. It seems to play completely differently from *Final Fantasy XIII* proper, taking the universe in an online direction that facilitates multiplayer adventuring (although online features, as Toriyama-san explained, are still being considered for *Final Fantasy XIII* as well). Tetsuya Nomura, *Agito*'s art designer, is also working as character designer on *Final Fantasy XIII*. Interestingly, while the PS3 games have shown no signs of resurrecting old *Final Fantasy* characters, *Agito* does feature the series' popular Moogle chracters.

Final Fantasy Versus XIII is the other PS3-based *Final Fantasy* game currently in the works. *Versus* is another separate proposition, with more of an action adventure bent than the central *Final Fantasy XIII* RPG under Motomou Toriyama's direction. In fact, Tetsuya Nomura is *Versus*' lead art designer, which explains the visual synergy between the three *Fabula Nova Crystallis* games, and Nomura-san also plays the role of director here. *Versus* is all about the control of the mysterious crystals that tie *Fabula Nova Crystallis* together. In this case, an heir to a kingdom is entrusted with the task of protecting a city's crystals from invaders, although further details about this main playable character remain a secret. What is known is that the game will make innovative use of the SIXAXIS' motion-sensing capabilities during fight sequences and there will be playable characters other than the central heir hero.

The sheer scope of Square Enix's ambitions with *Final Fantasy XIII* and its offshoots is really impressive. It's safe to say that without the storage capacity of Blu-ray, *Final Fantasy XIII* in its PS3 guises simply couldn't be done. Toriyama-san recently told Japanese magazine *Dengeki* that, "*Final Fantasy XIII* takes up the challenge of seeing how well the battles from *Advent Children* can be recreated in a game. Battles that were not possible to present in previous *Final Fantasy* games were shown in *Final Fantasy VII Advent Children*. On the other hand, *Final Fantasy XIII* will show how well that movie can be represented in a game."

If Square Enix gets anywhere near giving us a playable game with the beauty of *Advent Children*, we'll be very happy gamers indeed.



We mentioned we loved capes, right?

Giant squid-shaped spaceships – a bitch to park

We like your sleeves...

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THIS MONTH'S RELEASES PUT TO THE TEST

REVIEWS

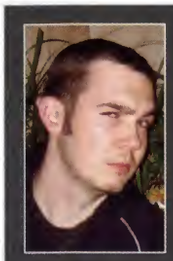
WHY IT'S GAME OF THE MONTH?

1. The dirtiest, most exciting racer ever.
2. Possibly the most beautiful game on PS3.
3. Incredible 12-player online mode.
4. Hard rocking soundtrack and engine effects.
5. Car, bikes, trucks – you name it, it's got it.

PlayStation. Official Magazine-Australia

GAME OF THE MONTH

"Fast, hard, dirty and at times utterly exhilarating..."
Read why *MotorStorm* is one of the most amazing racing games ever – **page 80**



WELCOME

By the time you read this you've hopefully got a shiny new PS3 lighting up your lounge room, or at the very least you're camped outside your local game shop waiting for the midnight launch. Certainly you won't be disappointed, with the astonishingly good *MotorStorm* ready to flatten you with excitement, *Virtua Fighter 5* prepped to kick your arse and *F.E.A.R.* to scare your pants off. Did we mention there's plenty more where that came from?

LUKE REILLY
Reviews Editor

REVIEW RATINGS

Here's what our review scores stand for:

10/10	Nigh on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
09/10	A truly astonishing game. Essential fare
08/10	Highly recommended
07/10	Good, solid fare that's well worth a look
06/10	Better than average, and acceptable for hardcore fans of the genre
05/10	An average game, probably not a lot to recommend here
04/10	Poor, but still with the odd moment
03/10	Extremely disappointing
02/10	To be avoided
01/10	Beer coaster

THE OPS2 AWARDS

We don't hand out high scores for nothing, so when you see one of these, you'll know it's a sign of quality. Look for them on game boxes.

The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!

The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!

The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

OPS REVIEW SETUP

We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...

PS3

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

Sega's hardcore fighter explodes onto the PS3 – **page 84**

- Fear p.088
- Virtua Tennis 3 p.092
- NBA Street Homecourt p.096
- Enchanted Arms p.100
- Godfather: The Don's Edition p.104
- Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom p.106
- Tony Hawk's Project 8 p.110
- Sonic the Hedgehog p.111

PS2

RICKY PONTING INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2007

Bat on ball or a swing and a miss? – **page 112**

- Test Drive Unlimited p.114
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PSP

CHILI CON CARNAGE

A spicy shooter with as many gunshots as Tequila shots – **page 122**

- Rocky Balboa p.123
- Hot PXL p.124
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- Every Extend Extra p.125

PS3 PS2 PSP
REVIEW

- **GENRE:** RACING
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** EVOLUTION STUDIOS
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **PLAYERS:** 1 (2-14 ONLINE)
- **PRICE:** $99.95
- **HD:** 720p
- **WEB:** au.playstation.com

BACK STORY: Rarely, since the days of *Smuggler's Run* have we seen many jumping, grinding, looping, flying, muddy racing action. At least, it's rare to see any good ones. Will *MotorStorm* change that trend? Have a gander.

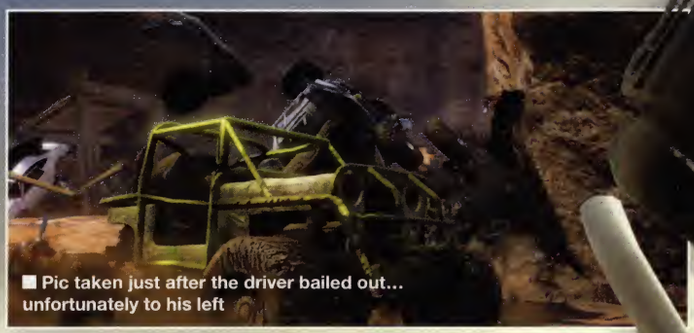
MOTORSTORM

Best. Driving game. Ever. Yeah – we said it!

PlayStation GOLD AWARD 10/10

The term "must-have title" is bandied about far too much these days. It seems like every second game that doesn't suck intensely is a "must-have". It's an obnoxious term and one that should be struck from the record and never used again by man nor beast.

Having said that *MotorStorm* is the very acme, the pinnacle of a "must-have" title. It's one of the only games that actually deserves that hyperbolic accolade. And amazingly it's one of the launch titles for PS3. This is how good things are now! It fair gives a man the brain sweats to think about how good things are going to be in a year or so.



■ Pic taken just after the driver bailed out... unfortunately to his left

■ "Pulling the finger and causing that six-car pile-up... So worth it"

But – back on track – *MotorStorm*. As a games reviewer you get to like certain genres and dislike others with a venomous passion. F'rinstance certain reviewers like games with horror elements and/or comic book characters (reviewers with names that rhyme with "Banthony", say). This same reviewer does not like car games. At all. Just doesn't enjoy them for more than a few minutes (with the possible exception of the *Burnout* series).

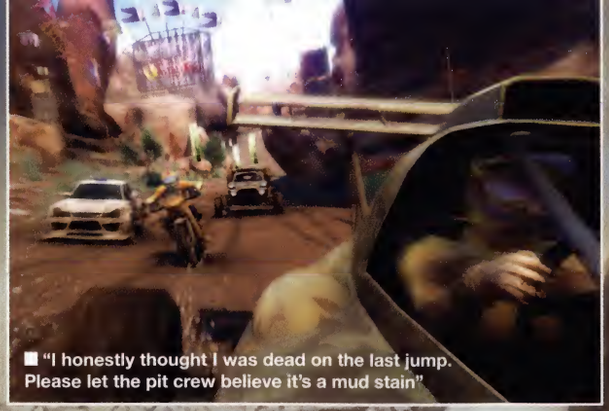
So when you see the score (turn over the page and have a look, we'll wait) you'll know that to receive such a primo grade for a genre of game that isn't even on this reviewer's wish list – we're talking about a seriously awesome game here.

HOW AWESOME?

Okay, well for a start this isn't your *Gran Turismo* type of car game. Yeah the cars look pretty, the light shines off them really

■ "Yep, I'm dead. Really hope my wife doesn't find those photos on my phone"

■ "Phew. I bailed out just in ti..." [snapping sound]



■ "I honestly thought I was dead on the last jump. Please let the pit crew believe it's a mud stain"

■ "Yep, I'm flyin' through the air. This is NOT good"

nicely and when the next *GT* comes out it'll likely be the visual equivalent of a naked tickle party with Scarlett Johansson and pre-crazy Angelina Jolie. But that's not *MotorStorm*. The *Storm* is a dirty game, both literally and figuratively. The tracks you race on are basically crooked mountain passes, mud-filled boggy creek beds and sphincter-clenchingly lofty mountain passes. There are jumps, ramps, bridges and even sections where you'll be driving along the side of a damn mountain! This is crazy racing, but with physics that somehow anchor it in reality enough so that it's an enjoyable kind of crazy.

FROM THE TOP...

We're getting ahead of ourselves here. Let's set this puppy up. You know you're in for something special when the opening loading screen is a work of art. You'll have a look and wonder if it's filmed footage. It's not. It's animation that is a bee's dick away from photorealism. Sure having a mode selection screen looking good does not a classic game make, but we just want to make it clear that every aspect of this title, every nuance, feels like it's been polished, buffed and waxed to a delicious sheen. Of the modes you can select, Festival's the one you'll want to get things revving.

MotorStorm appears to be a massive, sprawling festival of rev heads, hoons and ravers. It takes place in Monument Valley, where tracks are roughly hewn out of the rocks and mud. Levels are divided into tickets. These tickets can comprise of anything from one to four races. These races take places on different tracks, with different vehicles. You won't get to choose which vehicle to use on your first run, but if you complete the race with glorious gold, pretty good silver or shameful, shameful bronze you can play it again with the vehicle of your choice. And you will want to play these levels again. It's one of those corn chip games. "Just one more race..." you'll say to yourself. Then it's 4am and you're nodding off on the couch, a moist tendril of drool running down your arm.

Completing a race on a ticket will unlock other races. If you complete all the races on a ticket more tickets will be unlocked and so the game progresses. Teasing you with ever more crazy and massive tracks, raising the stakes as you go.

HOW DOES SHE HANDLE, SON?

The opening of each race, featuring a smooth pan across the contestants, lets

IRON MAN RACING

We're going to say it – REAL MEN use the motion sensing feature in *MotorStorm*. You hold the controller like a steering wheel and use ⊗ to accelerate and L1 to boost. It's hard to get used to at first, especially on the shorter tracks, but to truly earn the title of *MotorStorm* master you should complete the game using motion-sensing. Hell, just give it a go for a track or two – but remember: less is more. A little turn equals big on-screen movement. As with all things, practise will make you better.

■ "God I love winning. Wonder if anyone can tell my headlights are high-beaming?"

> ""This is the most melon-farming beautiful game I've ever freaking seen!" (swears changed to protect the innocent)."

you know you're in for something special. It's a treat for the eyes. Whether the track is raced on at dawn, day, dusk or night they're uniformly beautiful. You have the option of using either the motion-sensing capability (a bit more on that in the box out) or the traditional – albeit wireless – control system. The first time you race you'll probably be too busy uttering shocked Bon Motts like: "Holy crap!" and, "Look at the gosh-darn graphics!" and even, "This is the most melon-farming beautiful game I've ever freaking seen!" (swears changed to protect the innocent). Because no matter what vehicle you're driving everything looks... right.

The racing itself is as simple as it is addictive. You can accelerate, brake, slide and use your boost. Your boost will not be available to you for the first ten seconds of the race. This can lead to some clumping up of vehicles at the start. It's a good idea to avoid this, especially if you're riding something light like a motorbike or an ATV, as being sandwiched between two big rigs or punched off your ride by some smart arse on a bike is a bad way to start a race.

Once you get clear of the pack you use that boost and you use it hard. But here's the rub. The boost, while unlimited, heats your engine. Boost for too long and your engine, and you, will explode. There's a warning siren that wails like a banshee that just stubbed its toe on the side of the bed but sometimes, in the heat of a race, you'll be too busy avoiding rocks, other races and trying to find short-cuts to notice and then it's the big explodies, baby.

CAR GO BANG?

Another thing about *MotorStorm* is the crashes. They are, quite simply, amazing. We thought *Burnout* had pretty much cornered the market on crashing, and *Full Auto 2* has some impressive stacks, but the *Storm* provides quality smash ups. Every piece of the car will fly somewhere. Springs, wheels, axles, bits of chassis – everything that made up your once unsullied vehicle, scattered around like metallic confetti. If you're mounted on a bike, ATV or similar you too will go flying like a helmet-wearing rag doll. Other cars will smack you around like a disobedient puppy and each time you hit the ground mud, dust or dirt will puff up. It's these little touches that somehow keep *MotorStorm* feeling plausible. Something like *Full Auto 2* was too light to feel real. So when you crashed it sort of felt like a toy car crashing. Not so with the *Storm*. The stacks are amazing (hell, some kids out there have been uploading them to YouTube they're so pretty). If only there was some way to stop and just look at it.

Well there is. Press pause and start moving the analogue sticks around and you can check out the crash from every angle. Want to see where your driver has been blown to? You can. Wish to track down the flaming front wheel of your motorbike? You can do it. Hell, you can even pause during the race and take a look at the beauty of the spinning wheels, how they realistically squirt up mud. Your vehicle even gets dirtier as the race goes on. Muddier on wet tracks, dusty on dry ones. It's so schmick looking you feel like you could write "WASH ME" on the bonnet. You can't though, so don't try. Fingerprints on the telly. It's a bad business.

ORGANISED CHAOS

It's hard to convey in words the crazed sense of chaos and excitement you'll get in most races in *MotorStorm*. The learning

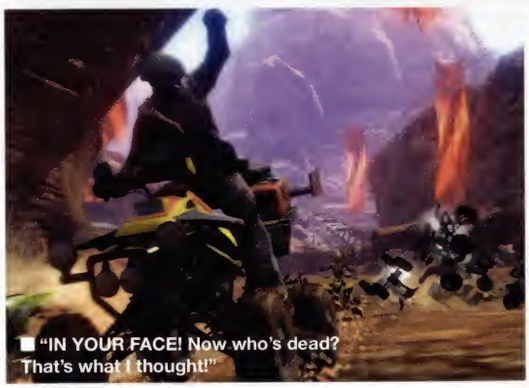
■ This is dirtier than a picture of a zebra and a hippo getting it on

■ "I never thought I'd say this but I do regret not buying that helmet with the motorised visor wipers"

■ "I always wanted to die in an F1 car flying sideways into a cliff at 300km/h. Jackpot!"

HANDY HINT

The finish line's in sight. You're mere metres away. But you're coming fourth. You're not going to be able to catch up… and your boost is making that WAWAWA banshee squeal. Do you give up? Hell no! Keep the boost pressed down and you'll explode. But you'll explode forwards. Sometimes, not all the time but often, this will give you the extra speed to fire your charred wreck over the line and it still counts as a win. Also? It looks really cool.



■ "IN YOUR FACE! Now who's dead? That's what I thought!"

■ "That's more flying tyres than the Hulk Hogan vs Michelin Man Celebrity Deathmatch"

curve is a little steep at the start but the thing is, as much as you'll be crashing, wondering if you can make that jump, dodge that rock, or slip between those two warring trucks your AI opponents will be doing likewise. As you careen over some massive jump don't be surprised to see the flaming wrecks of your opponents flying through the air or burning by the side of the road. Even when you're playing by yourself, you feel like you're racing real people. And that's to say nothing of the real multiplayer which is slicker than a greasy piglet.

SO, LIKE, IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG WITH THIS GAME?

To be honest the flaws in *MotorStorm* are so few they're almost not worth mentioning. However, in the interest of giving a complete review we'll name them. This isn't a deep game, in the sense that you can't customise your vehicle and so forth. Sure you can unlock better versions of motorbikes, ATVs, buggies, racing trucks, big rigs and rally cars – and each has a choice of three or more paintjobs – but that's the extent of customisation. If you're one of those cats that likes to choose the colour of the sparkplug you'll probably find that aspect of the game a tad shallow.

The only real complaint is the game's lack of split-screen multiplayer. Sure you can play online but we'd have loved split-screen also. Look, it breaks down like this – *MotorStorm* is one of the best racing games to ever exist. The graphics, the soundtrack, the numerous alternate routes, the variety of vehicles all combine in a package of such slickness that you'll want to play this to death. Then resurrect it and play it again. Fast, hard, dirty and at times utterly exhilarating – *MotorStorm* is everything a game should be. **Anthony O'Connor**

PROS:
- It's the best car game ever!
- Non-racing fans love it too

CONS:
- You can't customise your car
- No split-screen multiplayer

OFFICIAL SCORE: 10

VERDICT: *MotorStorm* is utterly essential to everyone's PS3 libraries. Wow… just wow.

■ "I should not have drunk that 23rd Tequila shot last night"

- **GENRE:** FIGHTING
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** SEGA
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **PRICE:** $119.95
- **HD:** 720p
- **WEB:** www.sega.com

BACK STORY: Before Namco's *Tekken* made its debut, there was another title pioneering the 3D fighting genre. More than a decade later, the *Virtua Fighter* series is still a huge hit with fighting fans and a key event at fighting game tournaments.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

Sega's fighting style is impetuous!

"I dunno... I'm pretty sure poking your partner in the eye isn't a traditional part of a tango..."

With the PS3 finally upon us, the first fighter out of the blocks is the latest instalment in Sega's slugfest series, *Virtua Fighter 5*. Is it a genuine contender for the championship, or just another chump about to get knocked out?

The first thing that strikes you about *VF5* is the visuals. Right off the bat, it churns out glorious HD graphics at a blistering 60 frames per second for frantic fisticuffs. The characters are the stars of the game, and are rendered in incredible detail, with the weave of their clothing down to the stitch clearly visible, and in close ups, you can appreciate pores in the fighters skin and even individual strands of hair. At this stage of the PS3's early life, this level of detail on a human character is definitely without peer.

IMMA CHARGIN' MALAYSIA

In terms of the fighting arenas, the visuals are a little less consistent. Some stages like the City, a brawl set up in a steel cage in the bizarre location of a busy city intersection during a rainstorm, and Great Wall, an early morning bout with fog whisping around the fighters and occluding the early morning sun, look absolutely fantastic, riddled with interactivity and detail. The greater number of stages included simply look like stages from previous *Virtua Fighter* titles with a new coat of paint – certainly decent enough, but with fairly uninspired designs full of repeating geometry. Sadly, there are a few in the bunch that lower the standard considerably, with the River and Palace stages featuring some shoddy background textures that you'd expect to see in an early PS2 title.

Arenas come in three varieties, open, fence and high fence. Open arenas have no barriers on their perimeter whatsoever, and getting forced out of the ring results in losing as a ring out. High fence arenas are surrounded entirely by walls, and getting pushed back into the wall leaves you vulnerable to extended combos. The standard fence stages are a medium between the two, with a waist-high perimeter that you can be both pinned against or juggled over with a precise combo. Obviously, smaller and more enclosed arenas pose more hazards, and you'll need to adjust your play style accordingly if you're going to stay in the match.

As a minor gripe, it would have been nice to have more organic arenas. If fighting was confined to boxing rings and dojos, then a square ring is to be expected, but some more variety in the stages would have been nice. Still, the opposing school of thought would be that the fairly simple arenas keep the focus on pure fighting rather that too many environment interactivity gimmicks.

DO YOU WANT KARATE?

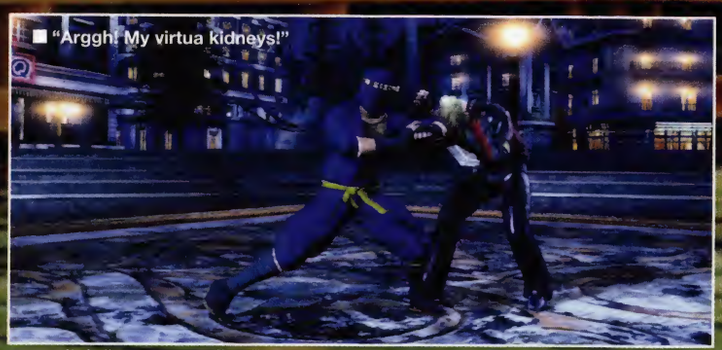
By and large it's pretty obvious that most of the fighters in *VF* were conceived around their martial art from the word go and built around that, without much more thought going into the design. Sega seems to almost be paying tribute to the history of the franchise by keeping the characters about their fighting style, rather than fleshing out the characters with more story and motivation for entering the tournament. Granted, the plots of most fighting games are so thin you could throw a tissue over them, but without the extra backstory, most of the characters lack charisma and ultimately feel a bit soulless.

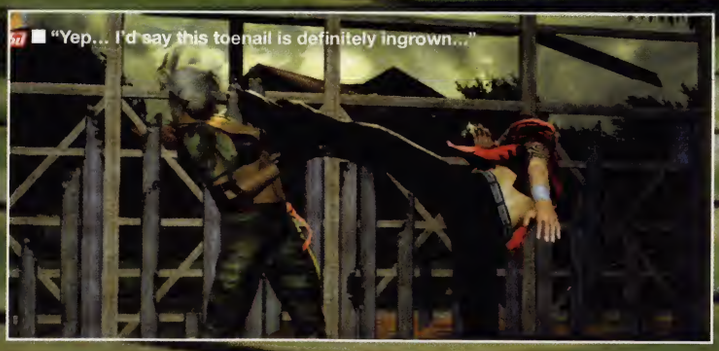
While *VF*'s competitors *Tekken* and *Soul Calibur* remain fairly playable on a standard controller, despite a seemingly simpler three button setup, *VF5* can be a bit cumbersome on the SIXAXIS. There are button combination shortcuts mapped to the shoulder buttons to make life a little easier, but with the amount of commands that require simultaneous directional and button inputs, (particularly diagonals) an arcade stick would be a far more ideal solution. Until some PS3-compatible sticks become available locally, fighting fanatics should start working out how to get their pre-existing PS2 sticks working on PS3, and for anyone not willing to make the plunge and splash out on the extra hardware – well, you'll just have to make do.

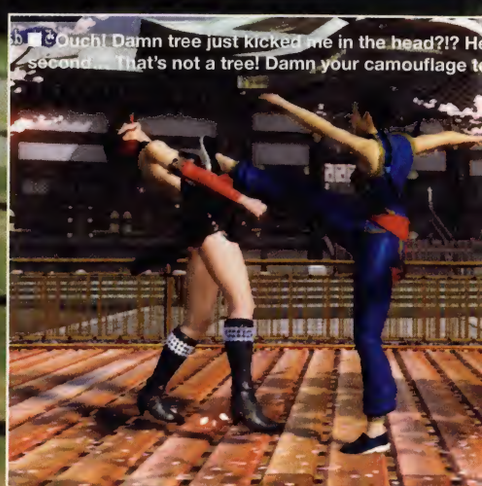
START RUNNING... NOWWWWW!!!

In terms of game modes, *VF5* is fairly standard fare. Arcade mode is (obviously) the straightforward single player game. Quest mode is the latest variation on Kumite mode, but has a real-world spin on it. Based on the west coast of the USA, you can select from a variety of virtual arcades to play at to increase your rank and unlock extra costume parts.

The head-to-head Versus mode, as you'd expect, is the bread and butter of the game. While the AI in *VF5* is outstanding, nothing can compare to an unpredictable human opponent, so after


"Arggh! My virtua kidneys!"


"Yep... I'd say this toenail is definitely ingrown..."


"Ouch! Damn tree just kicked me in the head?!? H... second... That's not a tree! Damn your camouflage t...

■ (sigh)

you've exhausted Quest mode, your mileage with *VF5* will largely depend on how many of your friends are into it.

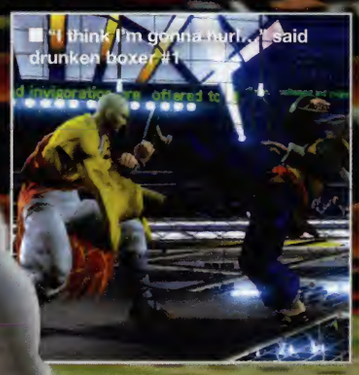
Sadly, the Dojo training mode is a lot thinner than previously, and only features freestyle and command training. While this is pretty much on par with other fighting games, home versions of *VF4* featured extensive tutorials to train you in the intricacies of the *VF* system. With further refinements in *VF5*, not including similar tutorial modes makes the game less accessible to newcomers.

VF.TV mode is basically the 'theatre' mode that allows you to view unlocked cinematic sequences and saved Versus mode replays. You also have the ability to view 'Exhibition Matches', which are a set of pre-recorded replays featuring every possible combination of combatants. Ultimately, not a particularly useful feature, but it can be a way to learn a few new combos and a nice way to appreciate the game in motion without having to concentrate on playing through the match.

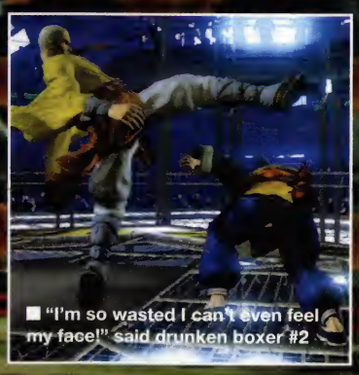
Customise mode is the standalone menu option where you can modify your character's appearance, and spend your in-game currency on purchasing new apparel. Game currency is earned by accumulating a winning streak, but only collected when you lose a match. In terms of the items available, it's probably the most extensive customisation options seen in a fighting game to date, but sadly it has one major issue. The fatal flaw is that the game only supports one save file, meaning that you can't take your custom character over to your mate's place to fight against his – they're trapped in your PS3.

EXCITEMENT AND INVIGORATION ARE OFFERED TO ALL MEN (SORRY LADIES)

Despite what seems to be becoming a laundry list of complaints, *VF5* does deliver where it counts. *VF* remains one of the most balanced fighting games, chiefly due to most fighters having similar defensive options. Regardless of your character choice, you've got a pretty even chance of winning, no matter



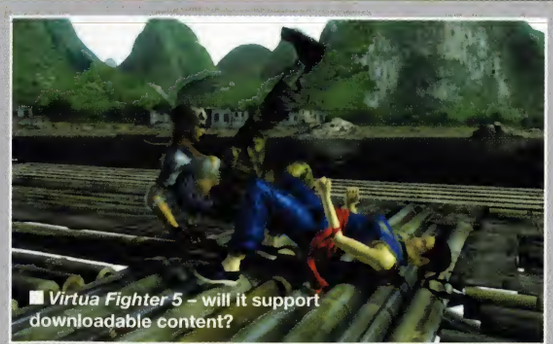
■ "I think I'm gonna hurl..." said drunken boxer #1



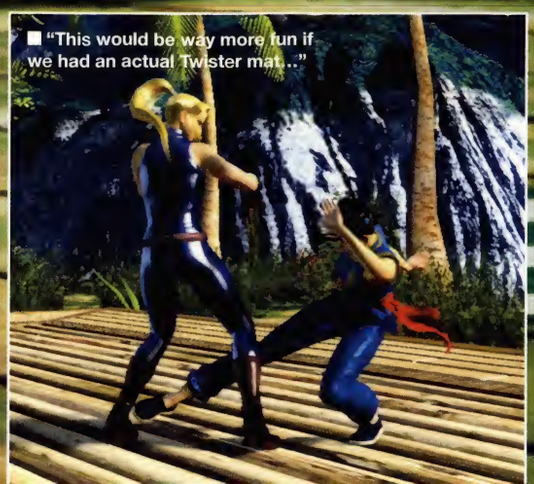
■ "I'm so wasted I can't even feel my face!" said drunken boxer #2

IS THAT YOUR BEST?

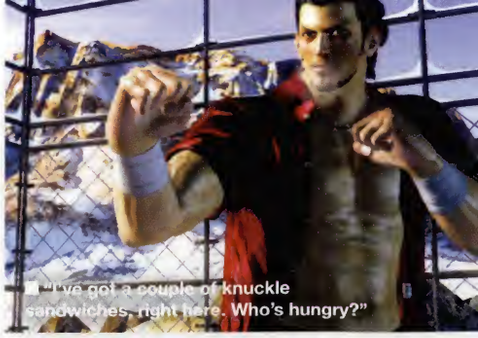
While *VF5* may be a bit light on features, but there's still the faint possibility that additional content may be added at a later date. For example, *MotorStorm* is releasing without a split-screen mode, but that's something the developer has hinted at as being downloadable in the future via the PlayStation Network. Still, with no official announcement from Sega at this point in time, it's probably best to take *VF5* on face value until further information comes to hand.



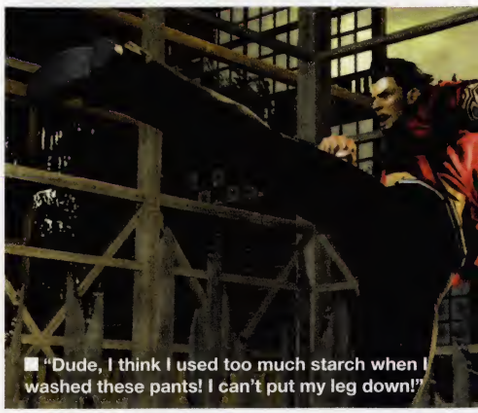
■ *Virtua Fighter 5* – will it support downloadable content?



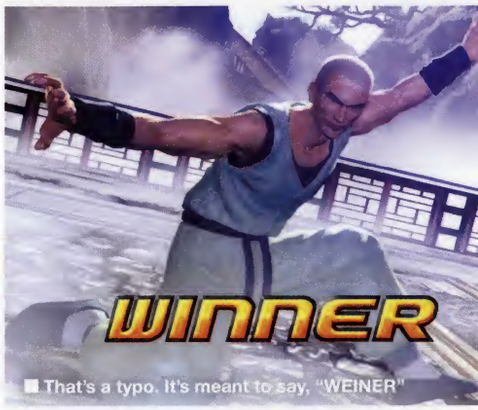
■ "This would be way more fun if we had an actual Twister mat..."



"I've got a couple of knuckle sandwiches, right here. Who's hungry?"



"Dude, I think I used too much starch when I washed these pants! I can't put my leg down!"



That's a typo. It's meant to say, "WEINER"

what fighter your opponent chooses, with skill being the main determinant. A master of *VF* will always blitz through the opposition by using structured attacks and regimented defence, and no amount of button mashing will get you anywhere.

As far as depth goes, each character has around 200 individual moves, so getting the most out of one fighter will require considerable dedication, and mastering a slew of fighters to get up to a competitive level will keep you going for many months to come.

Hardcore fighting fans will delight in *Virtua Fighter 5*, and it remains the most robust and technical fighter out there, but sadly, without a more robust package and tutorial modes to explain the in-depth fighting system, it's unlikely to win too many new converts for the franchise. When you consider that PS2 fighting games such as *Mortal Kombat: Deception* have had online play for ages, and even PSP brawlers featured downloadable AI packs, it's a little confusing as to why *VF5* didn't have a bit more meat in the knuckle sandwich. With a price tag of 120 bucks and being pretty light on features, the more casual fighting fans may find better bang for their hard-earned buck by downloading *Tekken: Dark Resurrection* from the PlayStation Store. **Nick O'Shea**

PROS:
- The most in-depth fighter to date
- Masterfully balanced roster

CONS:
- For hardcore fighting fans only
- Light on features

OFFICIAL SCORE: 08

VERDICT: *VF5* is as hardcore as fighting games get. Serious fans – start rolling up your sleeves.

INFO BYTE

Shun Di, *Virtua Fighter*'s aged master of Drunken Boxing actually has a move to drink saki from his gourd. In the arcade version, this actually causes him to turn red.

"Dude?! New pants!"

"Stick this in your magazine and print it, editor boy!" SMACK!

FIGHT CLUB

Australia's reigning *Virtua Fighter* champ squared off against Naz for a *VF5* showdown

Naz found out the hard way that the first rule of *Fight Club* is that you don't pick a fight with the national champ. Not unless you like getting your virtua teeth kicked in and holding an ice pack against your virtua balls.

Virtua Fighter champ Mike Abdow wisely chose Jacky Bryant for the first of the 'best of three' bouts. Naz picked Eileen, hoping he could take advantage of her speedy and unpredictable attacks to get a cheap win. Naz discovered Eileen isn't as unpredictable as he thought as Mike proceeded to block and counter her attacks while delivering devastating combos of his own. It wasn't long before both Eileen and Naz's pride were left bleeding on the floor.

"Okay, so you're alright with that poncy little bitch, Jacky. Let's see how good you are with someone else," Naz taunted. Turns out Mike's also an expert at the masked ninja Kage. Mike proceeded to mercilessly beat the virtua piss out of Naz. After two straight victories Mike had proved his champ status without breaking a sweat. Okay, so even blind Freddy could have predicted the outcome of this fight. There was no way we were going to pass up a chance to see the champ in action though. His awe-inspiring mastery of game shows just how much depth this epic fighter has. Mike gets so much tail it's not even fair!

"Oh, no way! Right in the Virtua tackle!"

"Wow, your abs *are* firm! And you got those from playing *Virtua Fighter*?"

VIRTUA INTERVIEW

We hit up *VF* champ Mike Abdow for the secrets behind his success

OPS: How did you become Australis's *Virtua Fighter* champion?

MA: I've been around in the scene since it began, way back when the original *Virtua Fighter* hit the arcades. I've been very active online, with the communities around the world. In terms of game strategy and developments I stay very up to date. You could pretty much ask me any question about *Virtua Fighter* and I could answer it. I was lucky enough to be able to play a lot with my mates and competition was always fierce. I've also had the opportunity to go overseas. Through personal and business travel I've attended a lot of tournaments worldwide over the years which have given me a really good level of exposure.

OPS: What are your impressions of *VF5* on PS3?

MA: *VF5* has literally blown me away. It's been out in Japan in the arcades for about six months but having the chance to see it and play it in my own hands is an experience beyond words for me.

OPS: What advice would you give *Virtua Fighter* fans out there? Other than not to bother taking you on?

MA: A large part of *VF*'s appeal is in its balanced roster. In my honest opinion you should choose any character you want. Figure out who's moves and style you like the most and go with them. Unfortunately with other games that aren't as balanced as *VF* people tend to flock to the more powerful characters and if you choose a weaker character you won't have a chance of competing. *VF* is not like that. You can honestly choose anyone and be competitive. With some characters it's easier to ramp up your skills quickly in the short term but in the long run it all evens out.

- **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
- **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** DAY 1/MONOLITH
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** VIVENDI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2 (2-16 ONLINE)
- **PRICE:** $99.95
- **RESOLUTION:** 720p
- **WEB:** www.whatisfear.com

- **BACK STORY:** *F.E.A.R.* was created by Monolith for the PC back in 2005. Day 1 Studios handled the PS3 conversion, the developer is definitely moving up in the world, with its next project an as yet unnamed venture for LucasArts.

F.E.A.R.

Scared? You should be...

PlayStation. BRONZE AWARD 8/10

■ With a gun in each hand, you leave yourself vulnerable to "being tickled"

The horror genre is nothing new to gaming. It's been around forever. Since its humble beginnings, (who could ever forget *Night Trap* for the Sega Mega-CD?) there's very few out there who can say they've never freaked themselves out playing a *Silent Hill* or *Resident Evil* at home, alone, in the dark, with the volume maxed out. It's like being in a slasher flick, except only now *you're* the hero, *you* get to live through the experience, and if you do die, it's a fairly simple matter of resurrecting yourself via the Hard Drive. Reincarnation by PlayStation. Freddy's worst nightmare. As we worked our way through *F.E.A.R.* something a little weird happened. We were playing it in the middle of the day, under a couple of seriously bright fluorescent lights and, we're not ashamed to admit it, we got a bit scared. Okay, perhaps we're overstating it. You know when you get that tingling on the back of your neck? We felt that. Followed by that "I've just walked face first into a spider web" feeling, with flailing arms and everything. Yep, we were scared all right. You will be too...

OOPS, I CRAPPED MY PANTS

The old adage goes "There's nothing to fear but fear itself". They definitely had this little puppy in mind when they came up that. We strongly urge you to purchase some adult diapers before stepping up to this one. You're going to need them. As veterans, we're used to decapitations, limbs flying, and blood by the tanker load. What we weren't prepared for was how goddamned creepy and what a head-trip it was. You play a member of the elite and enhanced 'First Encounter Assault Recon' unit. The scene is set by some unusual Scully and Mulder type shenanigans going on. A paramilitary group has infiltrated and taken over an aerospace compound. Many innocent workers have been taken hostage, yet no demands have been made. Your unit has been sent in to neutralise the situation. A mysterious signal interferes with your communications, and by the time it's restored, your entire unit has been compromised and butchered. It's now up to you to identify the signal's source, and wipe it out, all on your lonesome.

So off you go, locked and loaded. Within about ten seconds, you'll realise that there's something really not right about this game. The majority of levels take place in half lit, dank warehouses, filled with stairs, pipes, and air vents to shotgun your way in and out of.

So far, so good right? Then it really hits the fan.

You'll be casually walking through a room when all of a sudden a bloody, mangled face will flash across the screen, like a subliminal message, just long enough for the image to be burned on your eyeballs, and resurface each time you blink. You'll then turn a corner and catch in your peripheral vision a shadow. You race to follow it, only to watch it crumble and wisp away like ashes. Did we neglect to mention that the only other things alive are your enemies and a really, really freaky little girl? You'll frequently come across the bloodied corpses of factory workers, seemingly drowned in pools of their own blood, and at times, still smouldering corpses. The culprit? A little girl with paranormal abilities who is quite resilient to gunfire, bears a striking resemblance to the one from *The Ring*, and you'll be dropping a brick every time she appears, trust us! It's the tone that really sets *F.E.A.R.* apart. Apparitions manifest themselves, and then disappear, everything sounds eerie, with the silence punctuated by shrieking string instruments sounding not unlike running your fingernails down a chalkboard. It grates, gives you goosebumps and literally sends shivers down your spine. That's what we call atmosphere!

Now immersion, can only take you so far. It doesn't matter how great a playground looks, if it isn't stocked with some really cool things to play with, aesthetics don't mean squat. Fret not kiddies, *F.E.A.R.* comes fully loaded with some choice little toys. Allow us to break it down for you. As you'd expect, there's a veritable treasure trove of killer weapons to get your hands on. Sure there's the obligatory dual-

■ "Everybody get down... No, Johnson, not like that... wait, are you doing the robot? Hey, that's kinda cool..."

■ Smear some vaseline on this screenshot. That's kind of what the game looks like at 720p...

■ "I just love sparklers!" said the unexpectedly gay robot

■ "SURPRISE!"
"ARGH! OH! Geez, Steve. I was this close shooting your stupid brains out!"

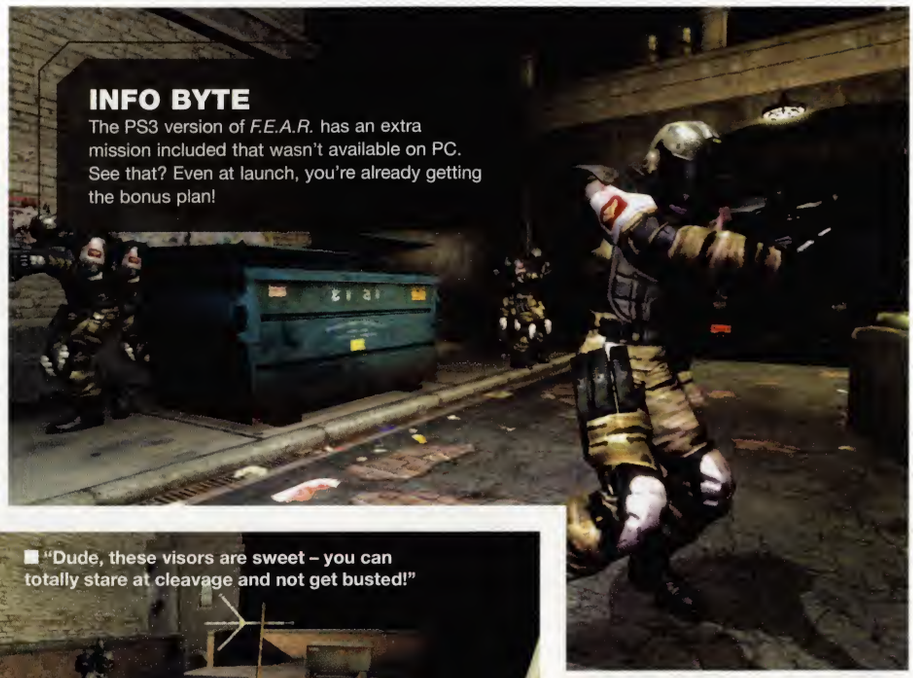
wielded pistols, shotguns and sniper rifles, but there are a few surprises you'll be salivating to get you're your trigger fingers onto.

Early on most troops are a bit of a pushover, until you "first encounter" an armoured one that is. They're tough sons of bitches and you'll probably rip through a clip or two to put 'em down. It's well worth it, as you'll be rewarded with a firearm with bone shattering power and our vote for best-named weapon ever. It's called the Armacham 10mm HV Penetrator. What does it do? It fires 10mm spikes into or through anything unlucky enough to be caught in its path. We love it. It rips through Kevlar like butter. It really tickles our funny bone to yell at some unsuspecting guard "I'm gonna nail your ass to the wall", and then actually do it. It really is a testament to the impressive rag doll physics the way the body slumps limply, still attached to the wall by several dozen or so spikes. Later on you'll get a really sweet particle gun that vaporises flesh and bone on contact, a repeater, that's right, we said repeater cannon, and a triple barrelled rocket launcher to just name a few. We also couldn't forget the motion sensor

■ Guys in visors – not that scary... until you see what's under the visors! (Blank expressions, mostly)

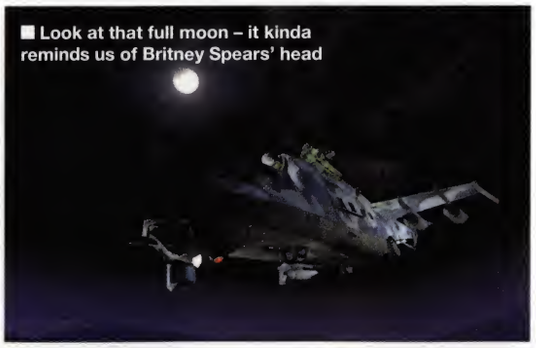
F.E.A.R. FACTOR

Late last year, Sierra and Gametrailers.com organised a short film contest called "Show us your *F.E.A.R.*" The idea was that gamers submit one to two minute films illustrating their own worst fears. Fittingly, the winner was announced on Halloween. It was quite successful and we hope that they have something in their bag of tricks for the European release. What's the OPS crew's greatest fear? That's a no brainer. Two words. David Hasselhoff. Just thinking about him scares the crap out of us!



INFO BYTE

The PS3 version of *F.E.A.R.* has an extra mission included that wasn't available on PC. See that? Even at launch, you're already getting the bonus plan!



■ Look at that full moon – it kinda reminds us of Britney Spears' head

■ "Dude, these visors are sweet – you can totally stare at cleavage and not get busted!"

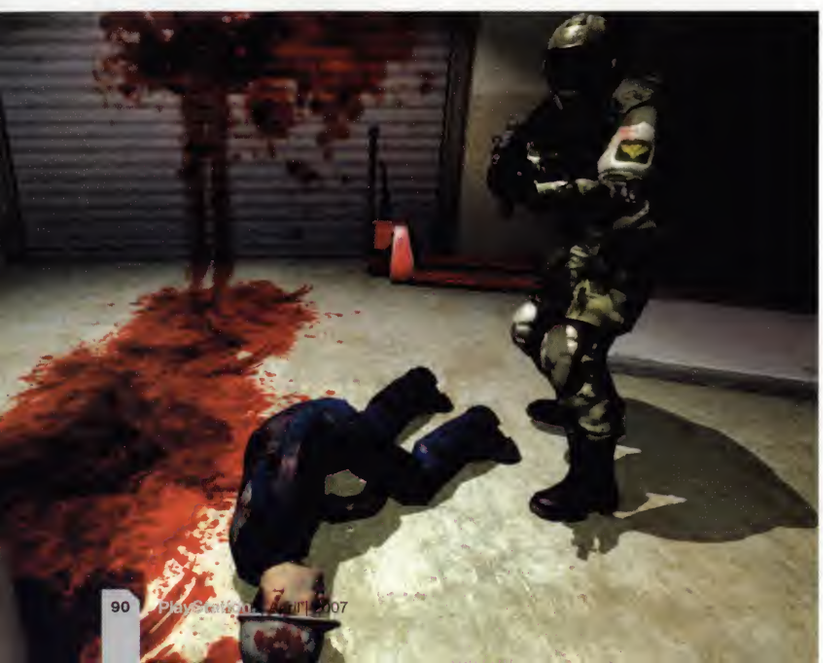
■ Move in slow-motion – just like Micheal Moore!

■ "I just set off the metal detector!" "But these guns are made of plastic?" "I know, but I have a foil-covered cucumber stuffed down the front of my pants..."

mines and super fun grenades. Take your pick from regular, remote-controlled or sticky. There's literally a bomb type for every occasion!

BEND TIME AND SPACE...

What we've told you thus far is just a tease, as by far the most fun feature is *F.E.A.R.*'s version of bullet time. Due to the nature of your "enhanced" reflexes, you have abilities beyond that of normal men. This allows you to relive your favourite squinty-eyed Hiro Nakamura moment (from the TV show, *Heroes*) and slow things down a notch. As you enter "slow mode" everything blurs around you, you continue to move at normal speed, but your adversaries don't. This gives you the opportunity for some really fantastic, and ridiculously gory kills. What to do first? Maybe run up to a guard, hit slow-mo, cleft him in twain with a single blast from the shotgun, and watch with some macabre satisfaction as he's slowly ripped from asshole to elbow in a shower of blood. Or perhaps use the ever popular "I'm going to throw this grenade, sit back and watch the beautifully rendered fire effects and explosion turn you into a quivering mass of pasta sauce" technique! Bliss!



Another really nifty idea is that you can customise the priority of your weapons. Each weapon has a default setting, so as you run out of ammo for a one, its replacement can be preset at the options screen. Like to use your shotgun as your primary, followed by twin pistols and bringing up the rear with Penetrator? It takes all of about three seconds to set it up. That's what we call thinking on the fly.

The only real let down are the graphics. Don't get us wrong, it's more than decent looking, but there is this overall fuzziness to your view that we can't quite understand – even running on our more than capable HD Bravia screen. Maybe the developers were going for the whole "dream sequence" idea. We really don't know, but we do know that it does affect the view of our surroundings, and noticeably detracts from the experience, which is a real shame.

F.E.A.R. is one hell of a shooter. It's creepy, kooky, bloody, violent and threatens to tear out your jugular if you're not paying attention. It's got a crazy sixteen-player online mode that adds serious longevity, and it regularly freaks you out. We'd like to tell you more, but embarrassingly... we've pooped our pants. Don't say we didn't warn you. **Dave Kozicki**

CAN I KICK IT?

What would an FPS be without a melee button? There's nothing better in close quarters combat than ramming the butt of your weapon into the face of your enemy, especially if you get the drop on them. Or is there? *F.E.A.R.* lets you go all Jet Li on their ass. Jump towards any unsuspecting victim and hit ◎ while in mid-air. Watch him get owned as you perform a devastating flying sidekick. Just don't try it against any robotic type dudes. You might end up looking and feeling a wee bit foolish.

PROS:
- You're not afraid of the dark
- Buckets of blood float your boat

CONS:
- You scare easily
- You've already got *Resistance*

VERDICT: The graphics could have been sharper, but *F.E.A.R.* is still a seriously chilling ride.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 08

SPECIAL GRAND PRIX SEASON PREVIEW

2007 FORMULA 1 SEASON PREVIEW

CHECK OUT OUR FULL GUIDE FOR ALL THE ACTION IN MELBOURNE

MEGA COMPETITION WIN ORIGINAL F1 ART – PAGE 48!

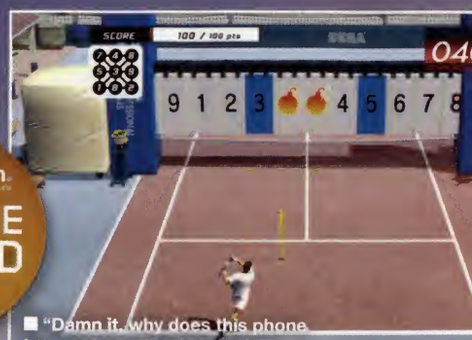
- **GENRE:** SPORTS
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** AM3/SEGA
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4
- **PRICE:** $119.95
- **HD:** 1080p
- **WEB:** www.sega.com

BACK STORY: The *Virtua Tennis* series began in the arcades (remember them?) way back in 1999. Since then we've seen sequels on both the PS2 and PSP, and the series has firmly established itself as the definitive videogame for tennis fans.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3

Has Sega served up another love game?

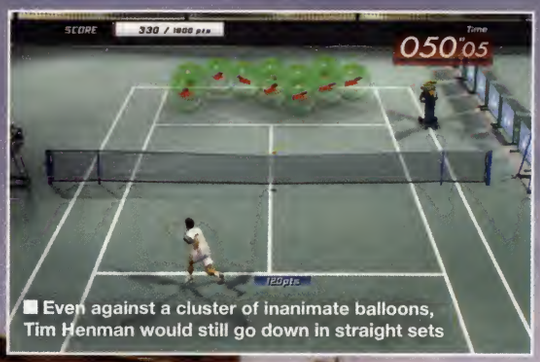
PlayStation. BRONZE AWARD 8/10



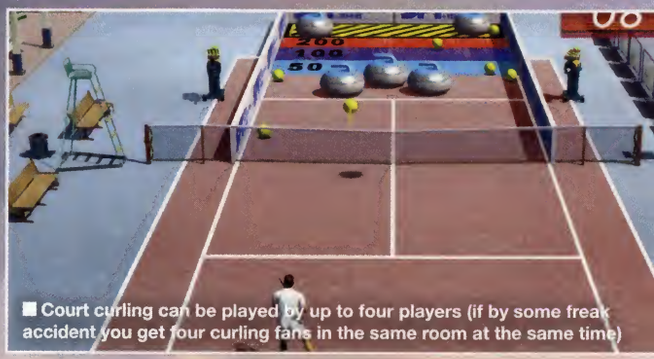
"Damn it, why does this phone have to be so hard to dial?"

We've got to come clean from the outset; we love *Virtua Tennis*. We love it unconditionally. It's always treated us right – it's never slept with one of our friends, or told us that we were adopted, or tied us naked to the bed and taken off into the night with our wallets and pants. It loves us back. We know how to push its supremely responsive and accessibly laid out buttons, and it knows how to show us a good time, the very best time in fact – at least when it comes to the tennis genre.

Virtua Tennis 3 provides every bit of the classic *VT* experience we've come to love so much over the years, although whether it offers anything substantial beyond that is another story (but more on that later). It comes with a larger roster of professional male and female tennis players than any previous game in the series, more of those quirky training mini-games and some truly drool-worthy high resolution visuals that really jump off your shiny new HD screen.



Even against a cluster of inanimate balloons, Tim Henman would still go down in straight sets



Court curling can be played by up to four players (if by some freak accident you get four curling fans in the same room at the same time)

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

Once again the control system is essentially flawless, although it has been altered slightly since *Virtua Tennis 2*. Top spin shots are executed with ⊗ or ◎, slices with ◎ and lobs with △, so the fundamentals remain true to the previous games in the series. However, the slice serve has been toned down so that it doesn't curve through the air anywhere near as much as before, and there's also a new "running top spin" shot you can perform purely by timing your chase of a near-out-of-reach ball, as a last ditch attempt to try and blast a winner past your opponent.

A new emphasis is placed on cross-court shots, as players have more realistic momentum and take longer to change direction – allowing you to work your opponent from side to side before going back to the same side twice and wrongfooting them completely in classical tennis fashion.

Other than that the game remains the balanced exercise in anticipation, timing and shot selection that it's always been. Correctly guess where your opponent is going to play their shot and you'll have more time to get to the ball, settle your player's feet and unleash a powerful passing shot. Guess incorrectly and you'll be scrambling to reach the ball, hitting a soft return, framing it over the sideline or missing it entirely. It's truly remarkable that a game controlled by only three buttons and a thumbstick can offer such depth – every point can unfold in an infinite number of different ways – and it's also one of the few sports titles that can claim a healthy lifespan as both a singleplayer and multiplayer game.

"Is it time for new balls yet? My old ones are getting itchy..."

The SIXAXIS motion-sensing control setup should be treated as the optional extra that it is. Steering your player around the court by tilting the controller in the appropriate direction works better than you might think, and slicing the ball by dragging the controller downwards or lobbing the ball by pulling it upwards is certainly an intuitive way to play the game (slamming the controller into the ground DOES NOT make your player smash their racquet on-screen, FYI). But for a game that relies so heavily on the deft placement of your shots, the tilt technique just isn't precise enough, and when *Virtua Tennis*' default control setup is so pure to begin with there's really no need to sully the experience with novelty alternatives. It's a nice bonus, but it's certainly not essential.

TOUR DE FORCE

VT3 is best enjoyed with a few mates over for a reflex-testing doubles session, but if you find yourself on your own you can still while away the hours in the

We haven't seen someone hit a winner like that since Anthony Callea punched Casey Donovan on the *Australian Idol* season two finale

■ "The ball is good," said our GP, after our "little scare" in the shower last week

■ "Damn, this view is crazy good!" thought the linesman

■ "Stay back or rush the net? What do you think, Roger?" "I think you have a nice ass..."

■ Sharapova against Williams, woman against man...

game's World Tour career mode. Your created character will be an absolute novice to begin with – slow moving, weak hitting and with a soft serve (and not the delicious vanilla kind) – so before you can enter one of the numerous tournaments on the calendar you'll need to rack up some skill points by either practicing at the tennis academy or indulging in the oddball training mini-games that have become the series' trademark.

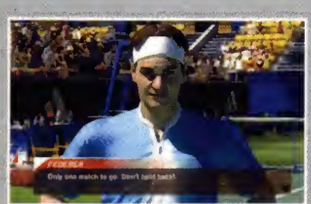
Serving oversized tennis balls at giant ten pins or slapping groundstrokes at rows of advancing ball machines might not sound like realistic ways to improve your player's ability, but they sure are a lot more fun than lifting weights and, uh... whatever else it is that professional athletes do to improve their game. There are a number of new mini-games that join the regulars, so you'll find yourself scrambling to grab fruit amidst a landslide of boulder-sized tennis balls and smacking volleys to fend off mechanical alligators, amongst other wacky activities.

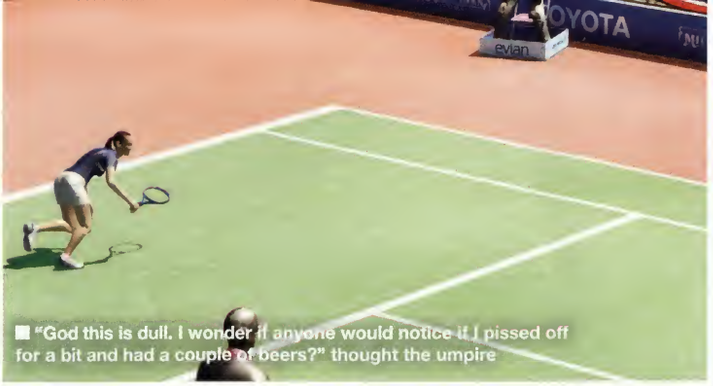
Meanwhile the tennis academy takes a slightly more realistic approach to your preparation, and tasks you to perform basic skills such as hitting MAX-powered serves and returning winners. The skill point upgrade system is organic, meaning that the shots you favour the most will be the ones that improve in terms of power, control and angle, so that eventually you'll end up with a player who is tailor-made to suit your style of play, whether you're a serve and volley expert or baseline-bound battler.

There are singles, doubles and mixed doubles tournaments to enter over the course of each year on the tour, and each tournament is ranked at one of four levels of difficulty. You won't be able to enter the majors until you get your world ranking up, so you'll have to spend a few years battling away in the satellite competitions before you can get a run in

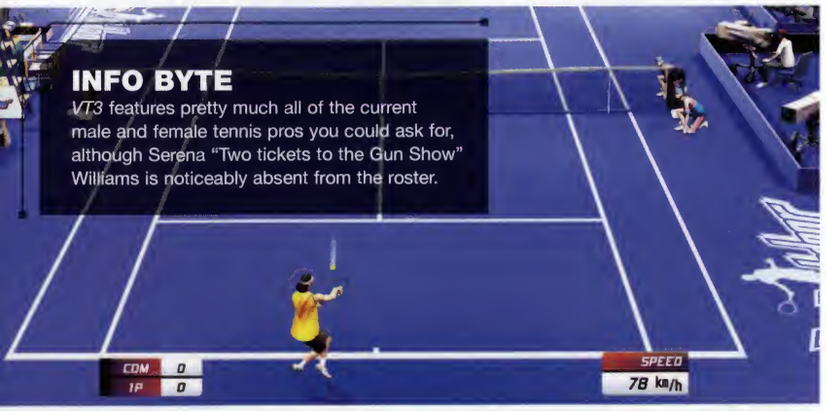
WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT?

During the game's World Tour mode you'll often get other players coming up to you on court before or after a game for a quick, monosyllabic verbal exchange, after which they'll stay staring at you impassively until you press the ⊗ button. Generally they'll spout such ineffectual jibes as, "You will not beat me!" or "That was a big game for you!" and it's generally all highly reminiscent of the token catchphrases you usually find in fighting games like Sega's own *Virtua Fighter 5*. Still, we must confess to being a little creeped out when Juan-Carlos Ferrero ambushed us on the way to the practice court change rooms and announced, "You've been coming here a lot lately, haven't you?" Um, what's the deal, Juan-Carlos? Are you trying to psyche us out or pick us up?!?





■ "God this is dull. I wonder if anyone would notice if I pissed off for a bit and had a couple of beers?" thought the umpire



INFO BYTE

VT3 features pretty much all of the current male and female tennis pros you could ask for, although Serena "Two tickets to the Gun Show" Williams is noticeably absent from the roster.

■ "So anyway, Rick, I've been having these weird dreams. Y'know, about girls?" "That's because you're not a ballboy anymore, Billy. You're a ball*man*..."

"You won't see a better tennis title on the PS3, and you'll also struggle to find a more enjoyable offline multiplayer experience."

one of the Grand Slams. As you become more successful you'll also unlock new racquets and clothing, although none of it is licensed from real world manufacturers (like in EA's *Tiger Woods* series), and you're kept up to date with your overall progress via emails from your coach.

SPLENDOUR ON THE GRASS

As mentioned earlier, *VT3* is a seriously good-looking game. The player animations are fluid and they replicate the moves of the actual pros with astonishing accuracy, from Roddick's hurried service movement to Monfils' dynamic leaping two-fisted backhand. The courts are colourful and rendered with plenty of detail, and look particularly nice when the sun is setting and everything is bathed in a rich amber glow, and the menu screens and presentation transitions are as slick as they come (although please, don't mention the God-awful music).

We know what you're wondering at this point; "Was Amelie Mauresmo actually born a man?" and we honestly don't know the answer to that (but they'd better be tennis balls tucked up her skirt). You also may be thinking; "Are the next gen grass courts really that much greener in *VT3*?" and that's where the following caveat comes into play.

Unfortunately the online mode that was announced earlier in development has been removed for the finished game, leaving *VT3* to only offer the same offline four-player support already enjoyed by multitap-equipped *VT2* fans for several years now. This is a major disappointment, and there really is no acceptable reason why we shouldn't be enjoying online tournaments and rankings in this new age of the immensely powerful PS3. Furthermore, *Virtua Tennis* games aren't released at the same frequency as say the annual EA Sports titles, so PS3 owners could be waiting quite sometime for a potentially online-capable *VT4*.

The lack of online also drives us to the conclusion that despite its cosmetic overhaul and the minor tweaks to its gameplay, *VT3* really isn't all that different a game to *VT2*. It's still an exceptionally addictive game of tennis, the very same one we fell in love with all those years ago, but the honeymoon is over now and we're looking for new ways to spice up the relationship. Trouble is, *VT3* doesn't even bother with the scented candles and naughty lingerie; it just lies there waiting, knowing that we're going to have a good time with it regardless, leaving us simultaneously comforted and at the same time slightly disappointed by the familiarity of the experience.

Don't get us wrong, you won't see a better tennis title on the PS3 until Sega cranks out a follow up, and you'll also struggle to find a more enjoyable offline multiplayer experience among the current crop of PS3 titles. The core gameplay of *VT3* hasn't changed much because it really doesn't need to – in terms of the actual tennis this is as good as it gets. But with the absence of an online mode and no drastic improvements made to the World Tour, *VT3* is more like the remastered recording of a classic than a brand new release. **Tristan Ogilvie**

PROS:
- The best tennis game ever
- Gorgeous 1080p visuals

CONS:
- No online play
- Gameplay unchanged from *VT2*

VERDICT: Still the best tennis game around, but the lack of any significant new features is a downer.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 08

REMEMBER YOUR TRAINING

Here are a few of the brand new training mini-games featured in *Virtua Tennis 3*.

BALLOON POP

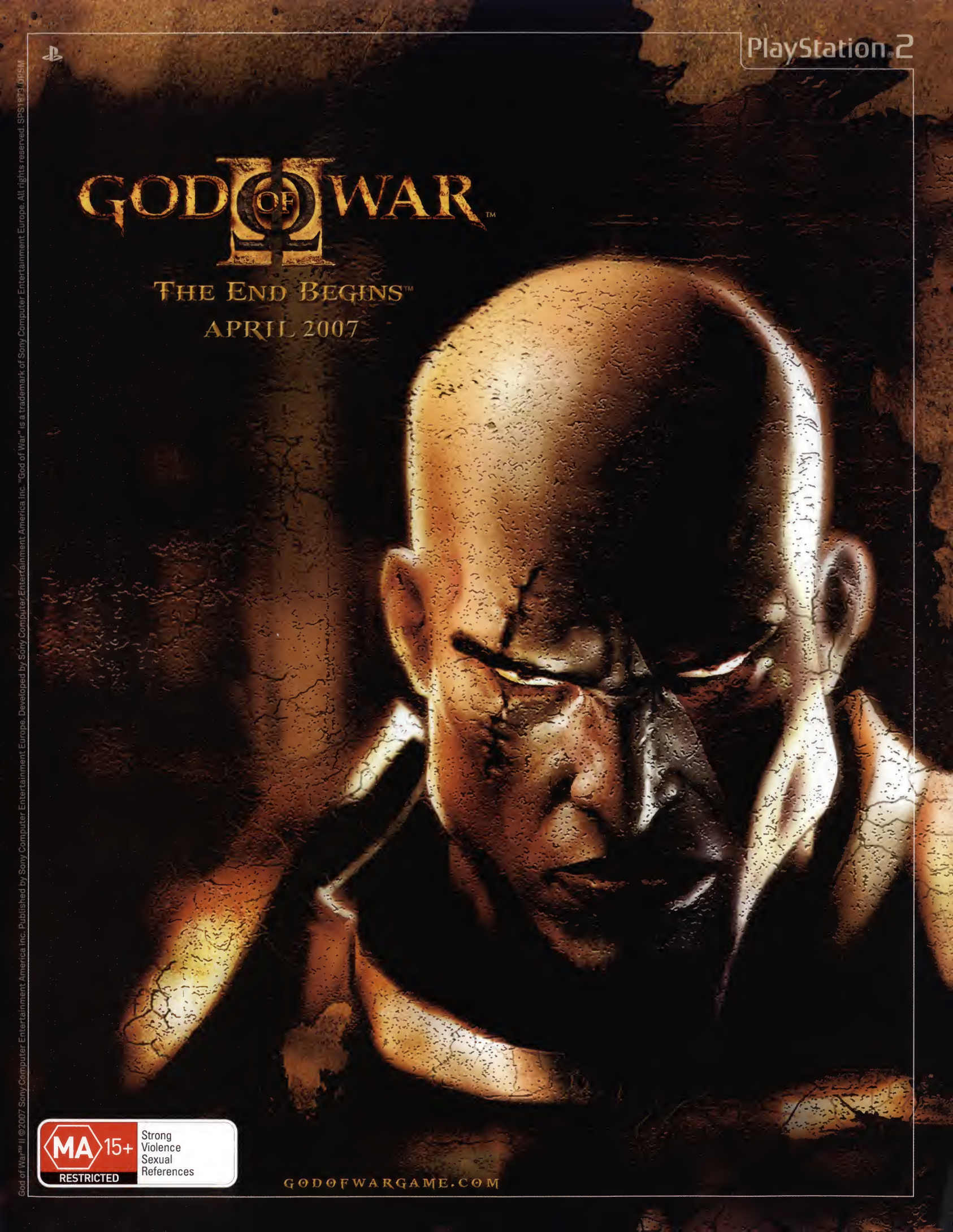
The balloons gradually inflate so you need to hit them with your serves before they eventually fly away. Different colour balloons give you varying amounts of points. Serving at balloons is the training method that took Mark Philippoussis close to the top of world tennis, before then plummeting him down into the sport's doldrums. Except replace 'balloons' with 'b-grade actresses' and 'serving at' with 'banging'.

COURT CURLING

Crack groundstrokes to knock the curling stones into the various point brackets – just don't hit them too hard or you'll push them into the no points zone and lose it all. FUN FACT: this is how Canadians actually play tennis. FUN FACT #2: Canadians call tennis racquets, "curling whackers, eh".

SUPER BINGO

Simple really, hit the ball at the numbers to form rows of three on your bingo card, but avoid the bombs or you'll wipe out your progress. It's all the fun of bingo without that "old people smell".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- **GENRE:** SPORTS
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** EA CANADA
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4
- **PRICE:** $119.95
- **RESOLUTION:** 1080p
- **WEB:** www.ea.com

BACK STORY: *Homecourt* is the next gen sequel to the *NBA Street* series. When the developers were designing *Homecourt* they found that fans preferred the second *NBA Street* game more than the third, so they put more of *2*'s design into this PS3 outing.

NBA STREET HOMECOURT

PlayStation. BRONZE AWARD 8/10

"Don't fake the funk on a nasty dunk..."

"What the 'whoa!' is this? That guy just jumped off and did a huge helicopter dunk... geez, there he goes again... You can actually see these guys sweatin'. Phwoar – what game is THIS?"

Expect the above reaction when you first see *NBA Street Homecourt*'s glory beaming out of an HD box. Expect it, cherish it, then straightaway mop up any drool that has flooded onto your chest in the event there's a member of the opposite sex around. You've been warned. *NBA Street Homecourt* is a neck-twister on first glance, not so much because it looks photo realistic, but because it throws out an unapologetic amount of ball-breaking madness to all inquiring peepers. More to the point, it, like a sloshed Jessica Simpson, looks like damn good fun.

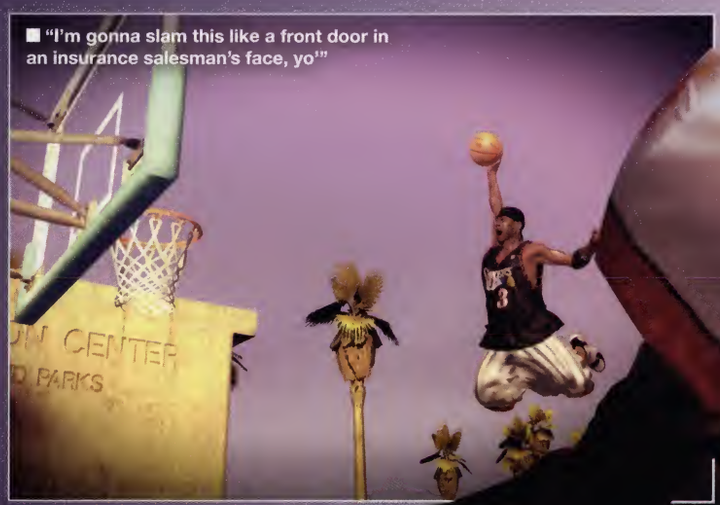
Those who've been mining for the new gem of basketball brainlessness since *NBA Jam* dominated pocket money everywhere will no doubt be familiar with the *NBA Street* series on PS2. Providing fast laughs and easy dunks, it was the closest thing to capturing the finesse and flamboyance of that original pants-smoking rim-shaker. But now EA has totally smashed the bar with *Homecourt*, arguably the best basketball banger in the history of recorded civilisation – that's thousands and thousands of years, folks – *thousands*, even since the time of the pyramids, and Rome, and those smart Greek guys who made out.

The aim of the game is simple. Score more buckets than the other team in 3-on-3 streetball. It's rough, it's raw, and anyone who's ever played a real game knows that rules come second to glory. It's here that *NBA Street Homecourt* stakes its claim as the genre's ultimate wet dream.

THE NAME OF THE GAME, BABY!

It's Comptonball with Vegas bling! Like all the arcade titles before it, *Homecourt* is light on the coaching fizz, and heavy on stratosphere slams, multiple crossovers, alley oops by the dozen and anything else that looks dope but would be impossible in reality. If you've ever seen one of those fluffy mascots do it during half-time, you can probably pull it off here. Apart from the shot clock, there are no rules. Defenders can barge the guy with the ball, steal it, then dunk without fear of consequence, while players are free to repeatedly tap the steal button like a *Space Invaders* junkie.

It's grand simplicity. When on offence you're out to perform trick combos on the way to your basket to boost up your Trick Meter, keeping your opponents from nicking possession, then making



"I'm gonna slam this like a front door in an insurance salesman's face, yo'"

"*Homecourt* is light on the coaching fizz, and heavy on stratosphere slams..."

"The 'Sydney Kings'? You're more like the *Rodney* Kings with the beating I'm giving you..."

"Check it out, guys – it's like I've got three balls... Uh, guys?"

■ "Dude, don't pass it to me – that thing's touched your crotch..."

sure you safely jam it home to snag both the basket and lock in your trick score to boot. Then, when your Trick Meter is totally maxed out, you can start a psychedelic Gamebreaker and unleash a monster combo of tricks.

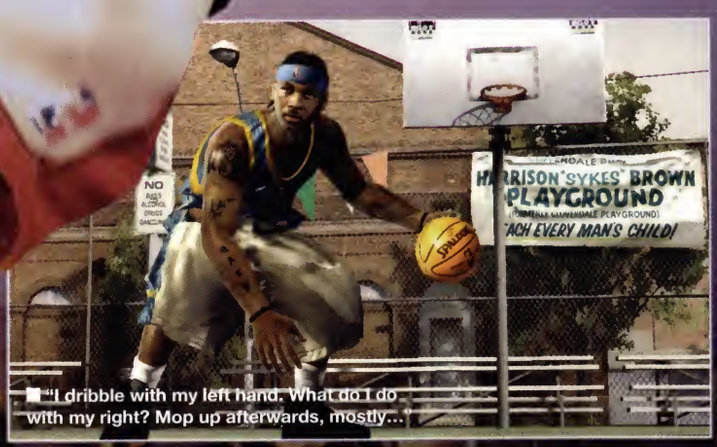
Sure it's the same deal every trip down the court, but its extremely satisfying every time you trick around a couple of bogies and bang it home. There are also a tonne of trick combos and filthy moves you can pull on the way to the hoop, including throwing the ball at the opposing player's head, regathering it on the rebound, then powering past them to the hoop. The satisfaction extends to the D as well. Despite all the flashy moves available when you've got the ball there's a lot of mischief defenders can get up to, too: it's pretty damn easy to block dunks with the right bloke under the ring, stealing the ball off an attacker happens more regularly than a Baghdad blackout, and there's a "shove" button that lets you knock any of the game's gold-handed superstars onto their rumps.

■ "I'm gonna stuff this like a twenty down a stripper's G-string!"

YOU'RE A SUPERSTAR!

Speaking of which, *Homecourt* features four members from each NBA team as well as a few sundry additions. It's hardly comprehensive, but it's solid enough for a game more about spunk than substitutions. More importantly each player has been assigned skills and weaknesses based on their real-world stats. While everyone can do everything to some degree, keeping your guys playing to their strengths is crucial if you want to start competing with your friends for cash or booze. You wouldn't, for example, have Yao dribbling the ball down the court when Jason Kidd is in his face, or likewise have Mike Bibby try to dunk on Shaq – ain't smart.

But that's the extent of the strategy required. This is the king of cheap thrills thus far on the PS3 by a mile, and probably the slickest arcade buzz in several years on any system. EA was aiming for a game built around accessibility and multiplayer fun and it has hit that goal head on.



■ "I dribble with my left hand. What do I do with my right? Mop up afterwards, mostly..."

CREATE A VANILLA FACE

Ever wondered what Allen Iverson and Dirk Nowitzki's love child would look like? Now you get the chance with *Homecourt*'s very odd Create-a-player mode. Unlike other games that allow you to select from preset components or to alter every facial dimension, here you pick a basic face type then blend it with two superstar faces. It's quite freaky and yields some odd court-bound mutants for you to toy with.

INFO BYTE

Included in the game are videos featuring several NBA stars "homecourts" and a short bio on how hard they had to work to find their success. It's actually quite inspiring.

■ You can break the backboard... and potentially your back, if you try one too many somersaults on the way to the hoop

A TISSUE FOR THE LONE BALLER

However, it's clear *Homecourt* is still a rookie in the single-player league. The developers have tried to remedy this by adding the Homecourt Challenge mode where you create a baller (see 'CREATE A VANILLA FACE') then form a street team with other NBA players in the name of pride, and more importantly, to unlock other courts to play on. But despite being the closest thing the game has to a season or tournament mode, it comes across as undercooked. With no proper-sized team to monitor and manage, no calendar to plan around, and most obviously no identity to camp under, it offers the lone player only a flicker of beefy substance.

In addition to the Homecourt Challenge mode there are also options to play Gamebreaker Battle, Trick Battle, and Back to Basics games, though none are quite as fun as the proper deal. Fortunately, this puppy offers an online mode to tackle all takers, so if you want to take on your mates you don't need to leave the couch to whup them senseless.

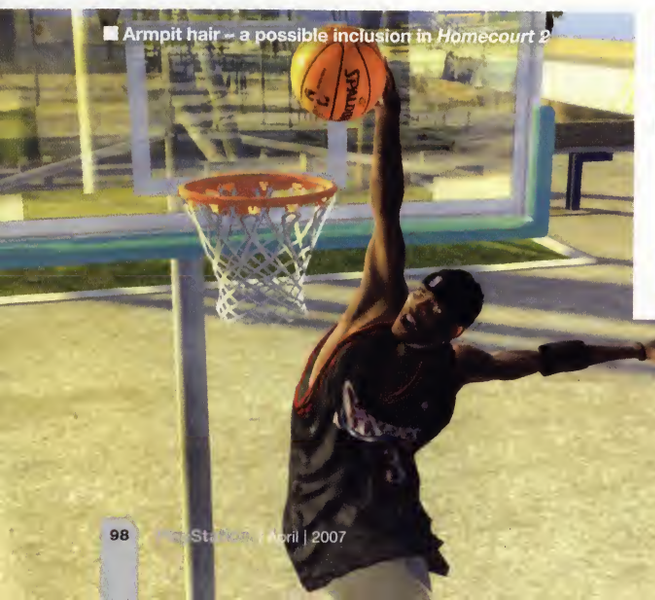
Of course if your mates aren't blessed with a PS3 then bringing them round to gawk at this stud of a game is no waste of time. Designed around next gen hardware, *Homecourt* features some devastatingly debonair animation that responds crisply to every input you'd care to throw at it, brilliant likenesses of its NBA superstars that are superior to the models featured in *NBA 2K7*, and a host of street courts packed with all sorts of welcome background fixtures and fittings. It's a world away from the PlayStation 2 in terms of graphical wow and it knows it.

On top of all the visual love is a thumping selection of rap and RnB anthems to help you pound your points in the paint. No doubt in a bid to show off rather than be practical, the music reacts to the tricks you perform on court, jutting and scratching to the pace of your crossovers and ball peacocking. Combine these phat tracks with a bunch of sniggering on-court banter and you've got every reason to connect the surround speakers up in order to transport all onlookers into your own private ghetto.

THE RULE OF 4

It's unquestionably a double thumbs up as far as impressing your mates goes, but just make sure you don't bring over more than three at a time. In a puzzling move the game only supports four-player multiplayer, despite the fact the PS3 supports seven controllers and the game features six players on court. We're not sure why this is the case, although we can speculate it may have something to do with the game hitting the Xbox 360 as well, which only allows four controllers to run off the same machine. If this is the case, we hope with future releases EA embraces the PS3's superior multiplayer capability. If it's there why not use it? Still, having a band of four jumping on board this baby is still a guaranteed recipe for laughs, and it's often difficult to get more than that many people around for a huge gaming sesh anyway.

The final word on the street is that *Homecourt* is a wallets-out must have for those keen on frantic multiplayer foolery. While not for single players, particularly those without access to online play, it's the perfect party starter. Its frenzied visuals and hyperactive mayhem will get just about anyone interested in having a go, while its straightforward but sassy design ensures they'll be able to compete right off the bench. **James Ellis**



■ Armpit hair – a possible inclusion in *Homecourt 2*

■ "I can't believe how high I am?!? Man this is some good reefer..."

PROS:
- Looks good, plays great
- It will make you more popular

CONS:
- You don't play well with others
- You prefer realism over fun

VERDICT: *Homecourt* is the brashest, most addictive basketball game yet. Instant fun.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 08

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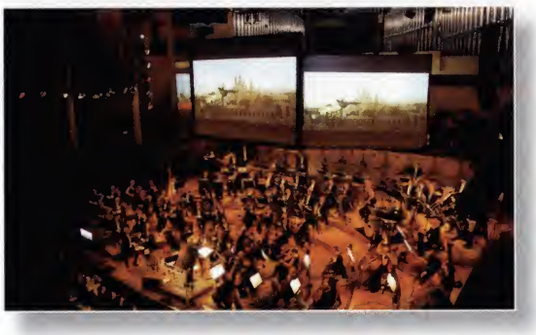

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- **GENRE:** RPG
- **RELEASE:** April 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** FROM SOFTWARE
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **PRICE:** $119.95
- **RESOLUTION:** 720p
- **WEB:** www.fromsoftware.jp

- **BACK STORY:** From Software has already delivered *Armored Core 4* to Japan's early adopters of the PS3, but there's no word on what From's next PS3 project will be.

ENCHANTED ARMS

PlayStation. Official Magazine-Australia
BRONZE AWARD
8/10

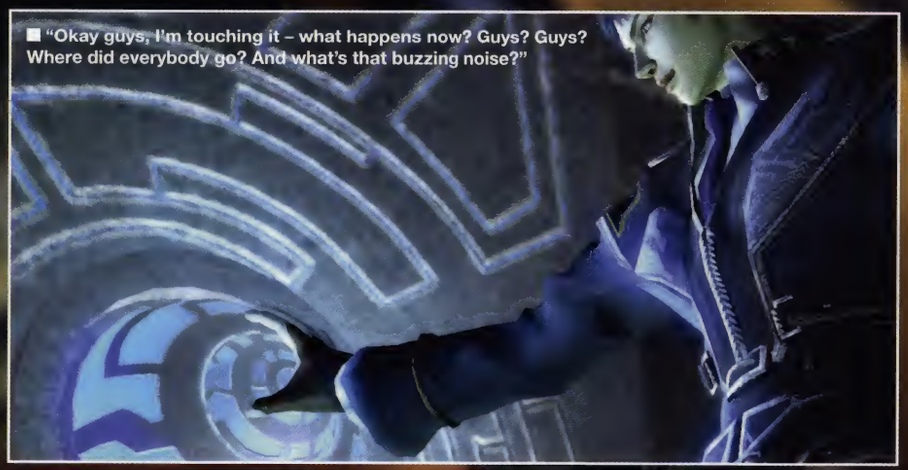
The name of a mystical pub? Nope – PS3's first Japanese RPG

Enchanted Arms (or *[eM] - eNCHANT arM-*, if you prefer the bizarre anti-grammar of the Japanese original) is the first proper Japanese RPG for the PS3 and it's by no means a disappointment, but it is a quirky kind of game. Not only is one of the main characters openly homosexual (19-year-old Makoto), but there's also a neat twist on grid-based battle systems and an intriguing blend of feudal and post-apocalyptic Japan in the game's hi-def world.

In *Enchanted Arms* you control a team of beautifully drawn characters who – in the fashion department, at least – look like extras from *Final Fantasy XII*. Atsuma is a powerful wielder of Enchanted magic and leader of the adventure. And Atsuma is joined by his friend Touya and the previously mentioned Makoto, as well as 17-year-old kickboxing girl Karin and her comrade Raiga. They're a spiky bunch, and it's easy to develop an affinity for them.

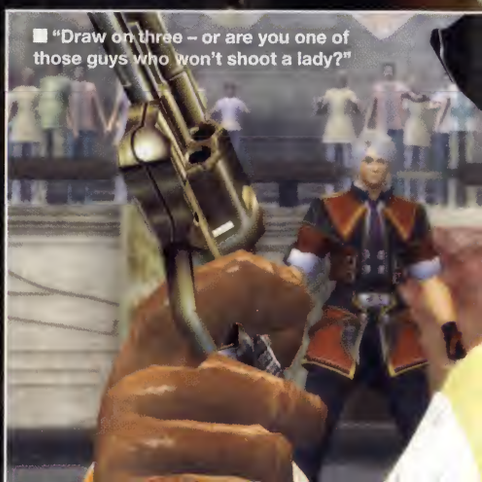
One of *Enchanted Arms*' distinguishing features, though, is that your team isn't limited to these main characters: in fact, there are more than 100 humans and creatures who can be drafted in as substitutes and extras as the adventure progresses. In some ways, this relieves the pressure to rely too much on levelled-up major characters, because you can always find someone else who's willing (and able) to do a good job for you in battle.

Developed by From Software (the Tokyo-based developer of *Armored Core* fame), it's no surprise to find that *Enchanted Arms*' gameplay is deeply tactical. When you enter a battle, your team of characters are lined up across a grid. At the outset of the game, these grids are just 4x3 squares big and you field



■ "Okay guys, I'm touching it – what happens now? Guys? Guys? Where did everybody go? And what's that buzzing noise?"

■ Smashing crates – a videogame staple since... forever

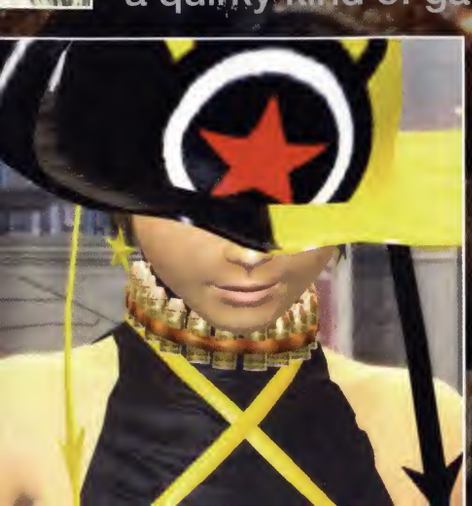


■ "Draw on three – or are you one of those guys who won't shoot a lady?"

■ "Wait, this isn't my house. And what is this, Japan? What the hell am I doing in Japan? How much did I drink? What year is it?"

■ The eyes are the window into the soul. Her soul? It's got a lot of bitch in it...

"*Enchanted Arms*... is the first proper Japanese RPG for the PS3 and it's by no means a disappointment, but it is a quirky kind of game."



only a trio of characters, but gradually the scale of battle increases and so does the resilience of your opposition. Positioning is everything, and battles can often be decided by good/bad character movement more than simply by the attacking and defensive powers available to them.

Unusually, your opponents also take up a formation on their own separate grid. You can then launch a variety of attacks from different positions within your half of the play area, although the effectiveness of those assaults depends largely on the placement of your character in relation to the targeted enemy. It feels like a very focused version of the battle gameplay in Sega's old *Shining Force* games – which can only be a good thing – where position is everything. For gamers whose minds are attuned to the tactical demands of chess (or, um, battleships) *Enchanted Arms* packs a satisfying challenge.

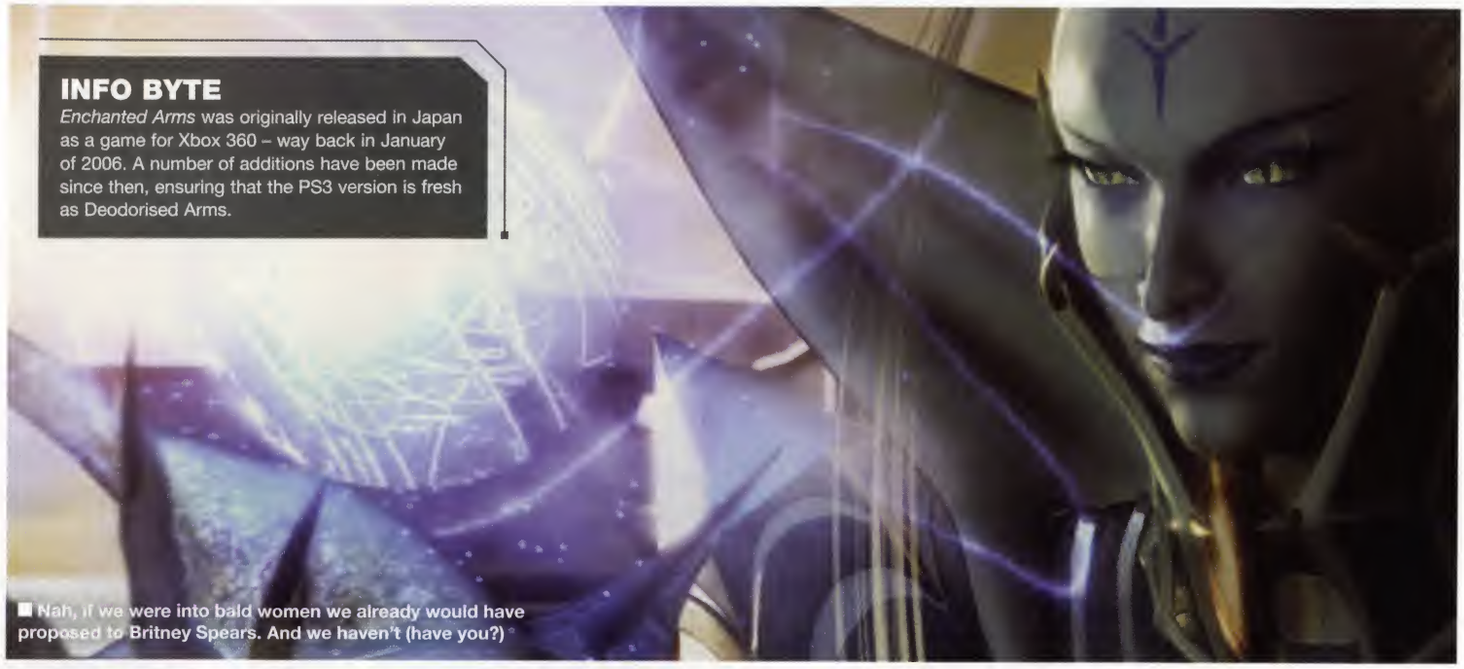
And you'll have to be economical with your approach: each member of your team has unique skills that can be maintained and used in battle, provided that a character has sufficient resources of the particular energy required to fuel its attacks. Extra special attacks become available at certain points within a battle, but these require even greater amounts of fuel, so frugality is sometimes more important than force. Overall, *Enchanted Arms*' battle system is both fair and rewarding.

Unlike the less tactically minded members of its genre, battles in *Enchanted Arms* are always engaging – you can't just keep tapping ⊗ to repeat an attack until the enemy withers because you have to consider where you're attacking from and what impact that positioning will have on both your enemy and on the movements available to your other team members.

The SIXAXIS features here, which obviously weren't in the original Xbox version, are undoubtedly fresh and new. However, they do feel a bit contrived. The main problem is a lack of variation, because although *Enchanted Arms* goes in for a kind of rhythm-action feature mid-battle (move the SIXAXIS in time to increase a character's Ex Meter), that challenge stays constant throughout the game and doesn't increase in difficulty or complexity at all. Puzzles can also be solved by waving the controller, but again, there's really nothing to it. Still,

INFO BYTE

Enchanted Arms was originally released in Japan as a game for Xbox 360 – way back in January of 2006. A number of additions have been made since then, ensuring that the PS3 version is fresh as Deodorised Arms.



■ Nah, if we were into bald women we already would have proposed to Britney Spears. And we haven't (have you?)

■ Five bucks this guy's arm is enchanted...

RAISE YOUR ARMS

SIXAXIS motion control in *Enchanted Arms* is used to solve some simple combination puzzles, and to effect special attacks in battle. It's fine and it works, but there's no reason behind it. Why not just use the SIXAXIS' face buttons?

as it's not a main feature of the game, we can enjoy *Enchanted Arms* without its motion sensor add-ons getting in the way.

JACKANORY

Enchanted Arms' plot is progressed through dialogue and lots of exploration. Thankfully, the PAL release of *Enchanted Arms* gives you a choice between English (dubbed) dialogue and the original Japanese soundtrack (with subtitles, naturally). The Japanese dialogue here, we reckon, is infinitely preferable to the slightly corny English voiceover. Still, it's great to have a choice that most other RPGs don't offer. The music here is catchy as well – it sounds like the kind of urgent disco-opera we've come to expect from playing *Final Fantasy X*.

Enchanted Arms' story stretches from more than 1000 years into the future all the way back to Japan's feudal era. It begins in Yokohama City, just south of Tokyo, but also takes place in other parts of Japan.

The storyline surrounds the creation of Golems (programmed war creatures), which were put away after a global Golem War to prevent that sort of thing from happening again, but one of which has just been brought back into operation. This rejuvenated Golem, the Queen of Ice, is set to cause chaos across the world – but Atsuma and friends are told to stop history from repeating itself.

Because conversations between characters are audible (the voice acting is a bit over-the-top, even in Japanese, but it's certainly entertaining) and the in-game models of players are displayed, you can see how they're feeling as they talk about new events and plans. It's a very tidy system of displaying communication – a world away from static dialogue screens.

In the graphics department, too, *Enchanted Arms* is a winner. Although *Enchanted Arms* was an Xbox 360 game to begin with, From Software has used its time on the PS3 version wisely, creating high-def backgrounds and visually richer environments. It's a port, yes, but it's done well and plays to the PS3's technical strengths. There are some excellent cut-scenes here, all full of impact and packed with a curious ambience, but thankfully From Software has opted to use these pre-rendered movie sequences sparingly. And rightly so, because the in-game engine does a fine job of displaying everything you need to see.

While walking around the game world, you'll notice how environments look as if they're pre-rendered – yet they are actually modelled in real-time and you have full camera control. Visually, this is the current standard for RPGs on the PS3. *Final Fantasy XIII* looks more impressive, of course, but From Software should be commended for getting something as polished as this ready so early in the PS3's lifetime. And it's not just a looker – *Enchanted Arms*' gameplay is intuitive and enjoyable.

In battles, for example, there are seamlessly integrated cut-scenes for each move, which show off *Enchanted Arm*'s awesome lighting and textures from all sorts of weird camera angles. The effect is such that every battle has great visual impact, even from early on in the game, and even though you'll be fighting hundreds of battles throughout the game's mammoth 40-hour run it's always a pleasure to have your eyes and mind challenged by *Enchanted Arms*' looks and gameplay. This game doesn't push in any new directions, but it delivers a tactical experience with all the know-how of... well, From Software. **Jonti Davies**

PROS:
- Finely tuned battle system
- Excellent hi-def visuals

CONS:
- SIXAXIS features feel gimmicky
- Doesn't expand the genre

OFFICIAL SCORE: 08

VERDICT: *Enchanted Arms* marks an excellent start for RPGs on PS3, even if it doesn't innovate.

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G

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playstation.com.au namco RIDGE RACER 7

This is living

PLAYSTATION 3

- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** EA REDWOOD SHORES
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **PRICE:** $119.95
- **HD:** 720p
- **WEB:** www.ea.com

■ **BACK STORY:** EA Redwood brought another seminal film classic to gamers last year with *From Russia With Love*. The developer has ditched the silver screen licenses for the time being and is currently hard at work on a next-generation *Simpsons* game.

THE GODFATHER: THE DON'S EDITION

"We recommend the merlot with the horse's head..."

■ "Sorry, da boss says I gots to whack ya" "Okay, but why the flaming stick? What about an inflatable hammer, or those giant foam fingers at the cricket?"

■ The suspenders say, "wussy" but the shotgun says, "don't mention the suspenders"

Yes, *The Godfather: The Don's Edition* is for the super duper new PlayStation 3, and yes these are screenshots from said super duper machine. Perhaps our little bulleted bolognaise spread doesn't quite shrink your pants like the surrounding pages that feature a bunch of tech-sational screenies, but there's a reason for that. Apart from a boost in resolution, a few tweaks to in-game traffic and NPC models, an online ranking board, and some sundry game content, *The Don's Edition* is identical to *The Godfather* that hit the PS2 last year. Cue the collective, "hmmm".

Of course that's not necessarily a bad thing given that *The Godfather* on PS2 was, after all, a pretty damn solid experience. Considering that the *GTA* juggernaut is absent from the PS3 launch list, perhaps you should just cast aside every other distraction and pick up Pappa Don, right? RIGHT?

Trouble is that while *The Godfather* made for decent buying on the PS2, the PS3 is a new ball game altogether. On the other hand, *The Don's Edition* isn't a new ball game. In fact, it isn't even a new season, match or, hell, even a new innings. It's the same spectacle you've already seen, watched from better seats. Worth the ticket price when you've got the equivalent of Heidi "*MotorStorm*" Klum and Angelina "*Saints Row*" Jolie mud wrestling in the stadium next door? You'd have to be one helluva fan.

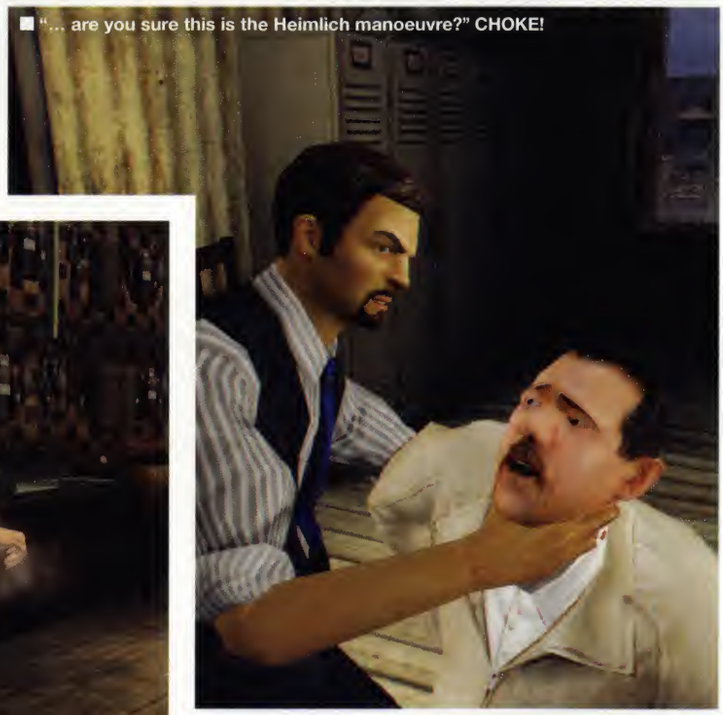
NEVER GO AGAINST THE FAMILY

For those who don't know, the game, based on the Puzo books and Coppola films, thrusts you into mid 20th century New York, amidst the gangsters, broads, and rock-chinned religion of the street. You're a member of the Corleone family headed up by Brando's Don Vito Corleone. Using a cocktail of loyalty, violence, extortion and ambition it's up to you to wriggle from street rat to made man, and perhaps even become Don yourself.

Like the in the PS2 version you can crash through the story missions in about 10-12 hours while working through the film's plot and interacting with the characters. From learning the ropes off pockmarked brick-in-a-suit, Luca Brasi, to protecting Don Vito in hospital, and delivering the horse's head to that bigot director, it's all here to be done. We're not going to go into too much detail in regards to the side missions as we covered that in the PS2 review. Let's just say you can mince up the local butcher, extort anyone making a dime, drive like a P-plater, act like Jack the Ripper, and take it to the fuzz.

WHAT'S NEW IN NEW YORK?

Let's talk new content. But only briefly, as there's not much to talk about – the new additions are a bit on the "so what?" side; the topping on your pizza you hardly taste. First up, are the new Enforcer and Operator "styles". We used the wanky quotation marks because, as you might have guessed, it doesn't effect how you play the game as much as it should. Then there's the ability to call in bigger hit squads, have the police fight by your side, two extra compounds of enemies to take out, five new contract kills, and more hustle and bustle on the city streets. That's pretty much it. They're positive, yes. But are they a big deal? The answer is a big sweaty "no".



■ "... are you sure this is the Heimlich manoeuvre?" CHOKE!

■ "OOOOFF! My Tuscan meatballs!"

IS DON, IS BAD?

With all these bland additions, the problems with the first game still haven't been adequately addressed. We don't want turn this review into a "why this game isn't as good as *GTA*" essay, but let's just say *The Don's Edition* is in sore need of some mini-games and side quests that can crack a "whoa" or two out of your dial. We're not asking for Bang the Farmer's Daughter missions, but how about letting us interact with the gambling tables in the back-store racquets, or allowing us to challenge wiseguys to a round of boxing at a nearby gym. Something. *Anything*.

As you can see from our screenshots, the game's using last year's coat of

■ "I slept with the fishes, but I ended up with crabs"

■ At this point we should probably point out that *The Don's Edition* doesn't actually feature Don Bradman. Pity

■ "Who whacked this man off? What? Why does everyone always laugh when I say that?"

■ "Arggh! When I shouted 'shotgun' it was because I wanted the front seat in the car!"

INFO BYTE

The term "mafia" was never used in the *Godfather* films due to an agreement with the producers and the Italian-American Civil Rights League. It ain't in the game either.

■ "1, 2, 10!" RATATATATATATAT! "Keep the change, ya filthy animal!"

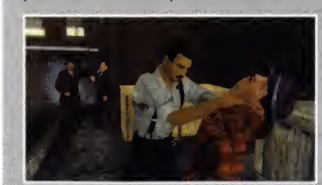
paint. While the resolution has been raised to 720p, the texture work looks hardly untouched, and barring some improvements to enemy compounds, little has changed in the design department. Sure, the extra traffic and varied NPCs make the city livelier, but it's not enough to make the game stand out on a platform that carries with it a slew of lofty visual expectations. Take the office consensus of "well, the fire effects are better…" as an indicator of what you can expect.

TIME TO SWIM WITH THE FISHES

It made a good PS2 game, but on PS3, *The Don's Edition* comes across as half-assed cash-in featuring under-whelming new content, lacklustre visuals, and no remedy for any of the major criticisms levelled at the PS2 game. On it's own merits it plays fine, and there's certainly some bloody fun to be had, but compared to the rest of the launch line up it's one game you should let sink to the bottom of New York Harbour. If you need to get a *Godfather* game, get the cheaper PS2 version. At least you're expectations won't be as high. **James Ellis**

SHAKE AND BAKE

One of the new control innovations in *The Don's Edition* is the ability to grab an enemy then use the motion sensitivity of the SIXAXIS to slam them into walls, crates – anything! Only problem is that it's a tad unintuitive for something trying to make the experience more interactive. For one, you've got to wait for the animation of each slam to finish before you go for another one, making it feel all too clunky. Secondly, the game doesn't award you much of a benefit from using the technique as it's often easier to just head butt the poor bastards.



■ "Open fire, men – I think he's got a concealed weapon under that towel…"

PROS:
- You're obsessed with "whacking"
- You can't wait for *Saints Row*

CONS:
- *Saints Row* is out in May
- The PS2 version is cheaper

OFFICIAL SCORE: 06

VERDICT: Forget the Don, do yourself a "favour" and pick up another game at launch.

PS3 PS2 PSP

REVIEW

- **GENRE:** RPG
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** SOE
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
- **PLAYERS:** 1 (2-4 ONLINE)
- **PRICE:** $119.95
- **RESOLUTION:** 720p
- **WEB:** www.untoldlegends.com

BACK STORY: SOE has had plenty of experience with action RPGs. It's a little surprising that the same people behind the hugely popular *Everquest* and *Champions of Norrath*, produced this sub par effort as its virgin PS3 outing.

UNTOLD LEGENDS: DARK KINGDOM

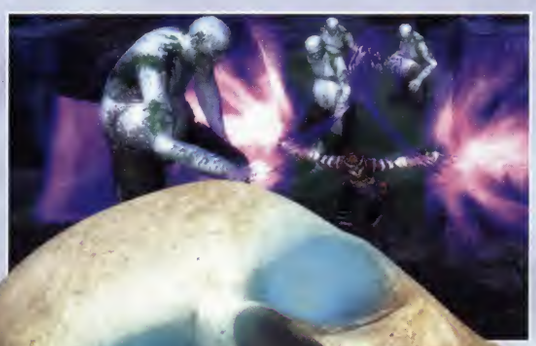
Some legends are better left untold...

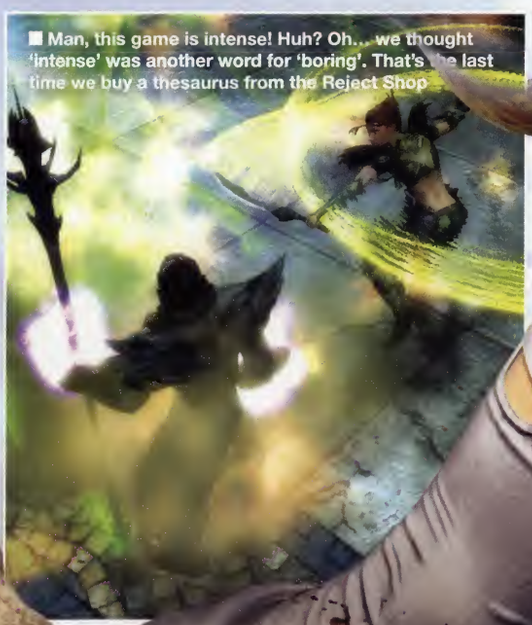
It's always an uneasy time, when a new console is launched. There's a lot of nervous anticipation, with questions like; "Will the hardware be up to scratch?", and "Will the launch titles excite and whip gamers up into a frenzy, or will they be a little flat and average, like Pamela Anderson before the plastic surgery?"

There are several titles that have really come to the party and blown us away, thus far. *Resistance* is an exceptional FPS with some of the best weaponry we've ever seen, *MotorStorm* is one of the most gorgeous games to behold, and has some seriously impressive physics coming into play. So where does *Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom* fit in to all this? The first RPG of a new console, it has some big shoes to fill, considering *Final Fantasy XII* has taken all the glory to be had on PS2. Does it stand up to the challenge, delivering all the glorious graphics and super fun gameplay an RPG fanatic could ask for? No dice. Not by a long shot. In fact, it could be a serious contender for the most unimpressive addition to the PS3's catalogue. It's an average PS2 game stuck in a PS3's body. Nice work SOE, a swing and a miss, right off the bat.

'Action RPG' is a title that has been thrown around a lot lately, with very few actually living up to the hype. *Final Fantasy XII* executes it flawlessly. It is faithful to old school RPGs with a deep magic and character upgrade system, and carefully walks the line between both styles of gameplay. *Dark Kingdom*, unfortunately, doesn't, and the longer you play, the more obvious it's inherent flaws become.

"Okay guys, don't freak out – I'm going to cast a 'naked and horny' spell on us... What? Well if we're gonna call ourselves a 'party', then let's freakin' PARTY!"





Man, this game is intense! Huh? Oh... we thought 'intense' was another word for 'boring'. That's the last time we buy a thesaurus from the Reject Shop

SMITE, LEST YE BE SMOTEN

Evil is spreading throughout the Kingdom of Duroth unabated. The King has charged you with the arduous task of battling this evil, in all its forms, until it is vanquished. Through the course of the game, it is later revealed that the King himself is the puppet master, pulling the creatures of the dark's strings, and has basically sent you on a fool's errand. To be perfectly honest, the storyline is of little, or no consequence, as it seems to have no bearing on the passage

■ They call me the Lightning Rod, because once I erect this thing you're gonna be shocked [unzipping sound]

of play. Rather than embarking on some deliberate, awe inspiring quest, you pretty much just roam around, very linearly, and smite all in your way until you reach a boss battle, defeat him/her/it and then move on. There's not any real depth to it.

You choose between three different characters, all with, as you'd expect, various abilities, strengths and weaknesses. You've got a beast of a barbarian, armed with a massive sledgehammer. He's a little slow, yet can both inflict, and take the most damage. A hot female scout, who is by far the most agile, and carries two neat little swords to slice and dice. A wizened old mage, with pre-requisite staff, long beard and Jedi inspired attire, rounds out the group. His attacks are primarily ranged and can be quite powerful once you get the hang of him, although he is the slowest of the bunch. Each character can access different magic, and choose which attacks to unlock as the game progresses, but a little more on that later.

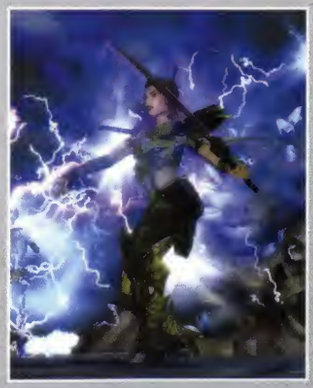
Combat, basically, is a hack and slash affair, very similar to *Dynasty Warriors*, with nowhere near the variety, or, let's face it, fun. That's part of the frustration we had playing this. There were a few really nice ideas, but they weren't really well fleshed out, so you wind up feeling a little unenthused and disappointed with the end result. A prime example of this is some of the manoeuvres you can pull off to stun your enemy in combat. As you work through combos, you can pitch your enemies into the air with a well-timed attack. Sounds cool huh? It could've been. Especially the mage, who actually levitates the orc, demon or whatever instead of just smacking them up into the air. The problem is that the moves don't flow, or allow you to chain them together. Dodging is another incomplete offering. Each character has either a commando roll, or back flip, to evade attacks, and can even make a counter upon landing. The problem is that the counter isn't delivered until a second or so after you land, rather than incorporated into the dodge, which is a damn shame, as it limits its usefulness.

Imagine how awesome it would've been to beat your foes into submission, launch them into the air, and jump up to deliver the finishing blow. Or if the mage, who has some pretty sweet magic at his

■ "ARGGH! One of these firecrackers just flew up my pant leg! Oh, mommy!"

ISN'T IT MAGICAL?

Each character has a range of different spells available once unlocked, assigned to either ⊗, ◎, △ or □. These are bought with essence that you absorb from fallen enemies, *Onimusha*-style, and have varying degrees of power. Some increase your strength while others, like smoke, make you harder to hit, poison does pretty much what you'd expect, and some use lightning to bolster your attacks, making them quite *shocking* (sorry).



INFO BYTE
One of the few things they got right in *Dark Kingdom* is the musical score. The use of the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra conveys a real sense of drama; pity the gameplay didn't elicit a similar response.

disposal (see 'ISN'T IT MAGICAL?'), could throw his staff at a bad guy, raise him five to ten feet in the air, hurl a couple of fireballs, flip him upside down and then repeatedly pile drive him into the ground for the coup de grace.

To be fair, there are some redeeming features, and one of them is the level of character customisation. Not so much appearance and costume, but more subtle nuances to upgrading and modifying your armour and weapons. Those of you who've played its two PSP counterparts will be very familiar with what we're on about. Through your travels you'll acquire various gems and orbs, from treasure chests or fallen enemies, which you can incorporate into your inventory via the menu. These can increase your weapon's attacking strength, add a bonus power, such as fire, or offer increased defensive capabilities. As you'd expect, each of these is a bit of a trade off. You often increase one to the detriment of another, but it is a cool little juggling act.

CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR...

There were so many things that were *almost* okay with *Dark Kingdom* it almost made us want to cry. Simple things, that are a given in most next generation games, were avoided, leaving the whole experience feeling more than a little incomplete. Something we love in most action styled games is the art of invisible-ness, where any objects hindering your vision, goes translucent so you can actually see your character and what he/she's attacking. It's like, "WOW! I thought that tree would obstruct my view, but I can totally see through it without any detriment to the gameplay". Awesome. Yeah, *Dark Kingdom* doesn't have that, so as you'd expect, the reverse of the above statement happens continuously.

This is compounded and amplified by the shocking collision detection. So many times we'd be in the midst of an intense battle, against numerous creatures of myth and legend, wailing on a half dozen or so of evil's finest captains, to suddenly find ourselves stuck behind a tree, or next to a few boulders with our character looking like they're in the middle of a violent seizure, instead of kicking some serious ass. Irritating doesn't even begin to describe it.

We're getting more than a little sick and tired of the moniker "Action" being used for RPGs when it's really just an excuse to deliver a substandard re-imagining of each genre, rather than a complete revamping of both. What we've seen of *Oblivion* already trumps this by a country mile, and provides some of the most beautifully rendered visuals we've ever seen.

Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom is an entirely forgettable effort. No ballads will be sung of this adventure. No stories of courage and bravery in the face of overwhelming odds will be told. It's a tale destined to be lost, forever, in the annuls of time. Shame, that. **Dave Kozicki**

PHONE A FRIEND

As you make your way through various sections, you'll come across creatures or other adventurers, who need rescuing. If you deliver them from the hands of their would be dispatchers, you'll be rewarded with their company and sword, magic or fangs, as they act as your back up for a pre-determined amount of time. It would've been nice if you could issue commands to them, like the dog in *Dead to Rights*, but then again, you can't have everything now, can you?

"*Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom* is an entirely forgettable effort. No ballads will be sung of this adventure. No stories will be told."

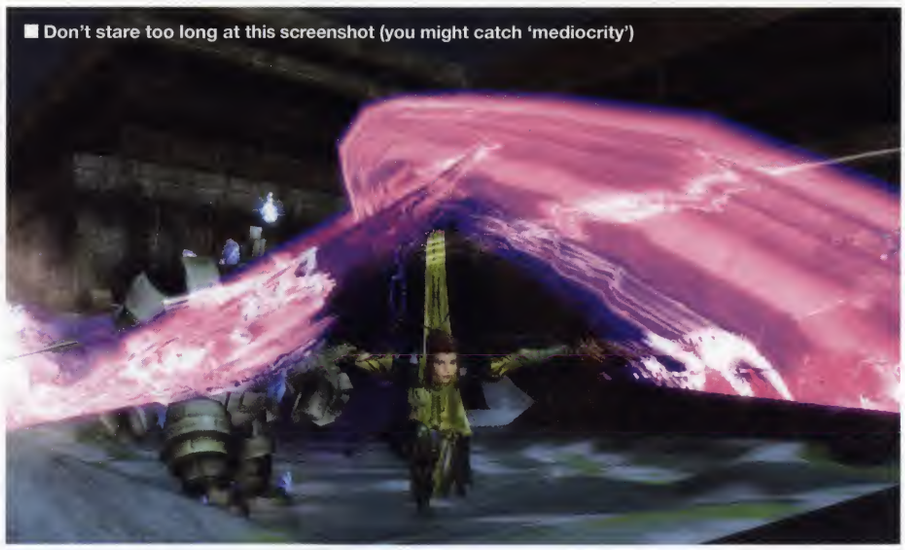
PROS:
- Reasonably lengthy quest
- Graphics are almost okay-ish

CONS:
- *Oblivion* is out real soon
- Bland, hack 'n' slash action

VERDICT: Stick to the PSP versions of *Untold Legends* – they're (surprisingly) far superior.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 05

■ "Take that, Nicole Richie! Take that, Lindsay Lohan!"



■ Don't stare too long at this screenshot (you might catch 'mediocrity')

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INTERACTION

WIN!

On shelves April 26, Academy Award winner Happy Feet has a distinctly Aussie feel and so it should with direction by George Miller and voice talent featuring Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman! The film, set in Antarctica tells the tale of Emperor Penguins who express their true love with their own 'heart song'. Our hero Mumble, however, cannot sing – instead he has the ability to tap dance, leading to a toe-tapping musical extravaganza!

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PS3 PS2 PSP

REVIEW

- **GENRE:** SKATING
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** NEVERSOFT
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **PRICE:** $119.95
- **RESOLUTION:** 720p
- **WEB:** www.thp8.com

BACK STORY: *Tony Hawk's Project 8* was released for the PS2 back in November 2006, but it was developed by Shaba Games. The PS3 version has been developed by Neversoft, the experienced team that started the series back in 1999.

TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

The venerable skating series is starting to become a grind

Tony Hawk's Project 8 is (funnily enough) the eighth game in the high-selling skating series that has been ollie-ing and heel-flipping on various console formats since it made its PSone debut back in 1999. Any true fan of the franchise would likely argue that the series peaked with *THPS3* and *THPS4*, and since then the game has descended into a tedious exercise in *Jackass*-influenced tomfoolery (*THUG* and *THUG2*) before returning to its skating roots with the ambitious but ultimately underdone *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*.

THP8 attempts to give the fans what they want – there's very little in the way of non-skating activities, and the 'loading tunnels' that prevented *THAW* from being an actual 'open world' game are gone, so that this time you're actually let loose in a huge environment with potential skating lines extending off into the distance.

THP8 PS3 features convincing gravity physics, impressive rag-doll animations for bails and highly realistic motion-captured tricks to perform. There's also a noticeable generation gap between the graphics engines, with the PS3 game exhibiting superior texturing and polygon counts, and other next gen treats like HDR lighting.

The game itself provides a reasonably robust skating experience; with seemingly hundreds of tasks littered around the landscape for you to tackle, ranging from performing flatland tricks to impress the locals, to flipping over a pirate ship ride in the game's fun park location.

But we really have done it all before. While we appreciate that Neversoft has returned the focus to the skating, and the slow-motion 'Nail the Trick' and organic skill upgrades are certainly welcome additions, the developer is still struggling to go above and beyond the standard it set with the earlier games in the series.

Furthermore, the lack of online support is disappointing, and the fact that the create-a-park feature has been severely downsized is particularly frustrating.

With EA's *Skate* on the way later this year, and a ninth *Tony Hawk* game likely due sometime before 2008, *THP8* provides little incentive for series veterans to get back on board – you're much better off waiting to see if EA's game is any good, or if at least the competition it provides can spur Neversoft into action and bring some real innovations to its waning franchise. Until then, the Birdman has been temporarily grounded. **Tristan Ogilvie**

NEW BALANCE

The PS3 version of *THP8* features the option to take advantage of the SIXAXIS' motion-sensing controls. The system is fairly flexible, allowing you to set the tilt controls for the rail balance, manual balance or general steering, and you can turn them all on if you're feeling particularly daring – even performing tricks by holding the grab or flip buttons and whipping the controller in the appropriate directions. We found it a little overwhelming to play the game with total tilt control, but activating it for grinds and manuals is both intuitive and effective.

"Gargh! Yo, who put butter on my board again?!?"

"Woah! Damn these Nike Air Teflons!"

INFO BYTE

THP8 features the customary epic soundtrack, with the likes of Gnarls Barkley, Nine Inch Nails, Primus, Sonic Youth and Australia's own soundtrack whores Wolfmother providing the tunes.

PROS:
- Great open-world design
- Realistic animation system

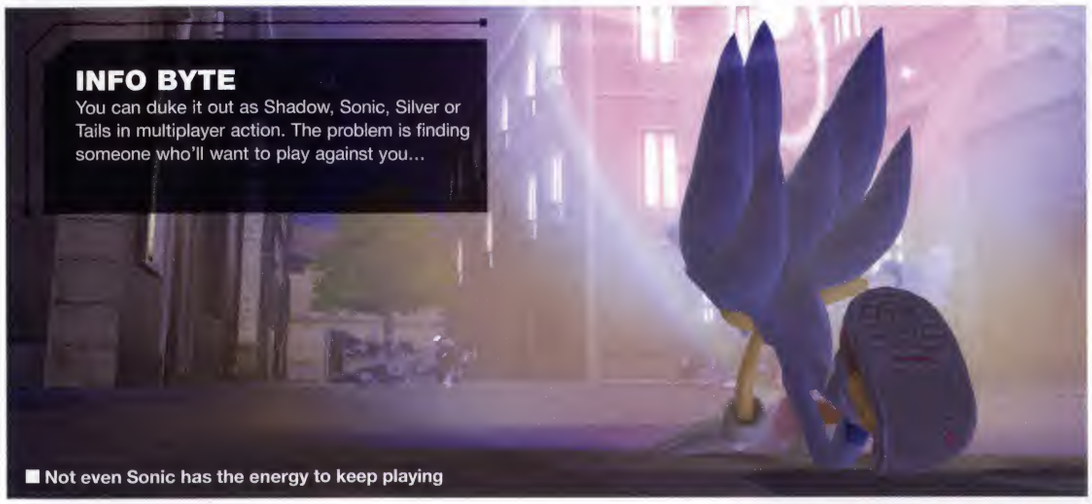
CONS:
- Same old skating tricks
- No online, no create-a-park

VERDICT: Slick new visuals, but still the same old skating. Neversoft had better lift its game for the sequel.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 07

- **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** SEGA
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **PRICE:** $119.95
- **HD:** 1080p
- **WEB:** www.sega.com

BACK STORY: There was a time when Sonic and Sega were money in the bank, but it's been a long time between drinks for both of them. Let's hope they get a serious wake up call after this title tanks and return to form.



INFO BYTE
You can duke it out as Shadow, Sonic, Silver or Tails in multiplayer action. The problem is finding someone who'll want to play against you...

■ Not even Sonic has the energy to keep playing

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Game over

Do you remember the good old days of gaming? You know, the days when *Galaga, Pong, 1942, Street Fighter* and umpteen *Pac-Man*s were all the rage. Then the home consoles were released and perhaps the biggest game of all was *Sonic the Hedgehog*. Seriously, do you know anyone who's been gaming for the last five to ten years who hasn't had a lash at it? We don't. It was a brilliant concept. Simple enough, charming, engaging, at times frustratingly hard and painfully addictive. We recall many sleep deprived weekends trying to finish that little bad boy. We've been fairly non-plussed by any recent incarnations of our fave blue-skinned marsupial, with just cause, as there's been very little to celebrate. We were hoping the trend would stop for his PS3 debut, but Sega has flushed it all down the toilet. Perhaps it's time to let sleeping hedgehogs lie...

Now we'd like to be fair to Sonic, so with all due respect, and remember, we're saying this with all due respect now... this is an absolutely terrible game. To be perfectly honest, we'd rather take out an ice pick and repeatedly stab ourselves in the eye, than ever have to see or play this puppy again. Where do we start? Remember all that awesome "dive right in" action they had in the originals? Yeah, that's all gone. It's been replaced with some really awesome walking around and talking to people – RPG type stuff. WOW! That's as cool as a pocket protector! We wonder if anyone who had anything to do with this abortion ever played any of the originals, as they've totally missed what *Sonic* was all about.

Now we get to the camera. It's perhaps the worst we've ever come across. It switches angles on you for no beneficial reason at the most inopportune moments. Like, when you're running over multiple speed bars, weaving around corners, looping the loops, you'd think that having the camera locked in a default position behind you would be a given, right? Wrong. The camera switches from side to side and to the front, so you're watching Sonic running directly at you, and you can't even see where you're going. It's absolutely ridiculous.

The only positive we could find was the graphics. Not the in-game engine, which looked like a dog's breakfast, just the cut-scenes, which were very polished and *Final Fantasy* inspired – though they did take a donkey's age to load up.

Usually we try to give a game the benefit of doubt, especially a beloved fan favourite, but we just couldn't get past *Sonic*'s inherent flaws, and atrocious gameplay, and found little, if any redeeming features. We guess it's back to the old drawing board for Sega. Better luck next time. **Dave Kozicki**

PROS:
- You're trying to hold on to the past
- You need a spare DVD case

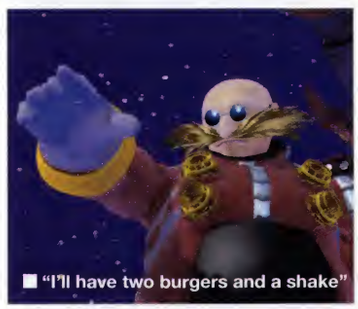
CONS:
- Play it. You'll know why...
- Idiotic camera

OFFICIAL SCORE: 04

VERDICT: Please, Sega, just let Sonic go. We'd rather remember him the way he was.

SAVE THE PRINCESS, SAVE THE WORLD

The "alleged" plot in the Story mode of *Sonic The Hedgehog* centres around the Princess Elise, and the remnants of her kingdom. Sonic must defeat Eggman yet again, as well as his hordes of robots and other diabolical creatures. This is of little or no consequence. What is of consequence is that the princess is voiced by Lacey Chabert. Lacey was the little girl from *Party of Five* and *Lost in Space* who's blossomed into a full blown hottie. Unfortunately even her extreme hotness can't save *Sonic* from itself.



■ "I'll have two burgers and a shake"

■ "Be honest Princess, does my ass look fat in this fur?"

■ "That's NOT what I meant about hunting 'tail'"

■ "Where's your other hand?" "Between two pillows"

■ "Damn it! Knew I should have brought the tank!"

- **GENRE:** SPORTS
- **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4 (WITH MULTITAP)
- **PRICE:** $89.95
- **HD:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.codemasters.com

- **BACK STORY:** Codemasters has long been a name associated with quality cricket videogames, beginning with the *Shane Warne* series on the Sega Megadrive and PSone and continuing with the high selling *Ricky Ponting International Cricket 2005* on PS2.

Short and wide – just like Rosie O'Donnell

RICKY PONTING INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2007

PlayStation. BRONZE AWARD 8/10

Slap your googly between a pair of fine legs...

Nothing says summer like the sport of cricket. Sausages on the barbie, beer flowing like uh, wine, and a taped up tennis ball fizzing around the backyard in the twilight hours of daylight savings time. Christmas, school holidays, trips to the beach and zinc cream – in fact we probably could have scrapped this whole intro paragraph and just typed the word "cricket" (perhaps with an exclamation mark). It's just that evocative.

So it seems somewhat untimely that *Ricky Ponting Cricket International 2007* should be released now at the start of autumn. Autumn is strictly about football and Easter eggs (both shaped the same way – coincidence? We think not). But wait – *RPIC2007* is actually coinciding with the 2007 ICC World Cup, the tournament currently underway over in the tropical West Indies where it's summer all year round, and comes loaded with all the official squads and stadia direct from the biggest tournament on the international cricketing calendar.

Well, we suppose that's okay then.

HIT AND GIGGLE

RPIC2005 was such a big hit with cricket fans because it focussed squarely on the ball-smacking fun of the sport, rather than mimicking the plodding simulation approach of EA's rival series. *RPIC2007* is largely more of the same, although a few crucial gameplay issues from its predecessor have been refined, making it an even better experience overall.

For example, the sweep shot that was criminally absent from the previous game now has two buttons devoted to it. L1 plays a sweep shot along the carpet, while R1 plays a lofted slog-sweep similar to the stroke Steve Waugh favoured later in his career. You can even play a reverse sweep simply by aiming on the offside when you're playing the stroke – it's a handy system, and it works extremely well.

You can now leave your crease in an attempt to put the bowler off his line and length, and perhaps belt it straight back over his head. Provided your batsman's confidence meter is full, holding down L2 whilst playing a shot causes you to skip down the wicket and get to the pitch of the delivery – although if you play and miss you've only got a split second to get back in your crease before a likely stumping (another new addition).

Bowling is entirely unchanged from *RPIC2005*; all of the deliveries are the same, and you can still apply aftertouch swing with L1 and R1, and use L2 and R2 for your special deliveries – such as vicious Yorkers that send the stumps cartwheeling back and very nearly impaling the wicketkeeper, or googlies that rip off the pitch and sneak between bat and pad.

On the other hand, the fielding has been tweaked significantly. The 'swing-timer' catching system now also applies to the wicketkeeper and slips, so as with the real thing you'll need to be focussed on every ball otherwise you'll likely shell one behind the wicket. When fielding the ball you now get the option of throwing to either end of the pitch, increasing your chances of affecting a possible match-turning run out, and field settings can be switched on the fly without resorting to intrusive menu screens. You can even create custom field placings and

Just missing the top of middle stump (like a blindfolded blow job)

New Zealanders – good at cricket, not so good at 'accents'. (We kid! We kid!)

The player likenesses are iffy at best

Right so that's the menu. Where's the wine list?

The shot cone in the bottom right corner shows the direction the ball's going to go. In this case, straight back past the bowler

If you've just faced six balls, it's time to cut your losses and get the hell out of the swinger's party

ON THE EDGE

Inside and outside edges are much more common in *RPIC2007* than they were in *RPIC2005*. They also feel more unpredictable and far less scripted than in any other cricket game; feathering through to the 'keeper, flying past the outstretched hand of third slip or cannoning off the bottom edge and chopping onto the stumps, for example. If you set an attacking field and drop it consistently on a good length, then you'll most likely get the reward – just like in the real thing. Bowwwled, Codies...

allocate them to each individual batsman on the opposing team. It's all extremely convenient indeed.

RIGHTS AND WRONG 'UNS

While it does feature the option to play both the ICC World Cup from 2007 and the ICC Champions Trophy from 2006, *RPIC2007* still comes up short in terms of modes and options when compared to EA's extensive *Cricket 07*, which was loaded with all sorts of domestic tournaments, international test tours and numerous other cups and trophies.

Worse still, the Classic matches that have been a part of the series since the *Shane Warne* games have been dropped completely from *RPIC2007*. We were anticipating the opportunity of tackling the Proteas' mammoth 400+ one day run chase against the Aussies from 2006, or maybe battling to save the third Ashes test as England on the final day in Adelaide this past summer, but instead we get absolutely nothing. Like an English outfielder presented with an absolute sitter, Codies has come up empty-handed – and as a result *RPIC2007* is a slightly weaker single player prospect than *RPIC2005*, particularly as the AI is still far too easy to beat, even on the Test difficulty setting.

In terms of presentation, both *RPIC2007* and *Cricket 07* each have their own strengths and weaknesses. *RPIC2007* certainly has the wood over its rival when it comes to its six-man commentary team and the exclusive use of the superb Hawk-Eye technology for LBW decisions, but it lacks the manual replays, huge variety of statistical graphs and end-of-innings highlights packages that are found in EA's most recent offering.

We suppose what we're trying to say here is that the once wide gap between the two competing franchises has now narrowed considerably. Ideally, if you could take the best aspects from *RPIC2007* and *Cricket 07* and fuse them into the one game then you'd have a very good cricket title indeed. As that's never going to happen, we're going to stick with the game that provides the best on-field experience, and that game is still easily *RPIC2007*. **Tristan Ogilvie**

PROS:
- Excellent control system
- Animations have been enhanced

CONS:
- Single player is too easy
- Not enough game modes

OFFICIAL SCORE: 08

VERDICT: An under-featured update of the PS2's best cricket game, but still an absolute cracker.

INFO BYTE
Adam Gilchrist's unlicensed counterpart is E. Gilchurch, a reference to an actual incident where the real life Gilly was asked, "Are you Eric Gilchurch?" by a misinformed English fan.

"Staring at your ass is really filling my bar up!"

"GONE! Piss off! Drop dead! Suck my ba--" said Lawry, before being tranquilised

PS3 **PS2** PSP

REVIEW

- **GENRE:** RACING
- **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** MELBOURNE HOUSE
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-8
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **HD:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.testdriveunlimited.com

BACK STORY: *Test Drive Unlimited* first peeled off the grid late last year on PC and Xbox 360 courtesy of Eden, the French studio behind the *V-Rally*. Aussie developer Melbourne House took the massive racer and pumped it out on PS2 and PSP.

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED

PlayStation. SILVER AWARD 9/10

Get your motor runnin'...

Let's get the prerequisite shock and awe out of the way first. We're amazed *Test Drive Unlimited* even works on PS2. We're even more amazed it works well. It's not that we don't think truly ambitious, sprawling games can't be truly terrific on PS2 – but we figured trying to squeeze this street racer, and the entire island of Oahu, into the confines of a PS2 would be like trying to get *Gran Turismo* to work on a mobile phone. However, Melbourne House pulled it off with aplomb.

First things first, *Test Drive Unlimited* is an enormous game. It's mostly covered in trees, especially much of the virtually inaccessible centre, but the 1500 square kilometre expanse is covered in 1600 kilometres of road. The terrain is all a little samey, but the roads vary significantly. From Honolulu to Pearl Harbour you'll find a maze of city streets, dual carriageways and tight 90 degree turns. The roads in the centre of the island vary between straight, high-speed burns through pineapple plantations and tight touges that wrap their way up and down Oahu's mountains. On the northern and eastern sides the roads hug the shore past Waimea Bay before meandering through a number of sleepy Hawaiian suburbs down towards Hanama Bay. And there's nary a single loading screen in sight from one end to the other. To make things less frustrating anywhere you've already driven or visited can be teleported to at any point later on.

The environments are a little lacking, smudgy at times and generally plain, but the cars have been lavished with detail. The glossy exteriors are strikingly crisp for those who prefer the chase camera, and the fully modelled interiors spoil those who favour the cabin view. Automobile aficionados will be stoked to know it comes with real cars from the best in the business (4-cylinder fans may be left wanting) including Lamborghini, Jaguar and Aston Martin. Oddly, Ferrari is absent (or extraordinarily well hidden) in the PS2 version. Car dealers are sprinkled across the island.

The handling satisfies, leaning more towards an arcade-style driving model but delivering just the right amount of oversteer. If you find yourself spinning out (something that can become common if you're not judicious enough with the throttle in the more powerful steeds), there are driving aids that will help you stay on the straight and narrow. The Hawaiian commuters that dot the roads don't pose too much of a problem – in most cases they can be shunted out of your way with minimal fuss. Your cars don't take damage, but again, a simulation this isn't. The events contain few surprises but the number of races is quite staggering.

It's hard to fully describe such a large title in such a small space, but *Test Drive Unlimited* truly is one of the better, and certainly one of the most unique, racing titles on the PS2. The cop chases don't match *Need for Speed Most Wanted* and the graphics don't match the beauty of *Gran Turismo*, but for cruising around a tropical paradise in the best cars your money can't buy, nothing beats *Test Drive Unlimited*. **Luke Reilly**

■ If you ain't first, you're last

■ "Damn it, I was distracted by my own reflection!"

INFO BYTE

Test Drive's innovative online play supports eight player races and thousands online simultaneously. It's like *World of Warcraft*, only with fewer geeks and more Lamborghinis.

■ Drive like this on an actual test drive? The Aston Martin salesman gets really cranky (sorry Richard, we just didn't see the bus – are they still docking your pay?)

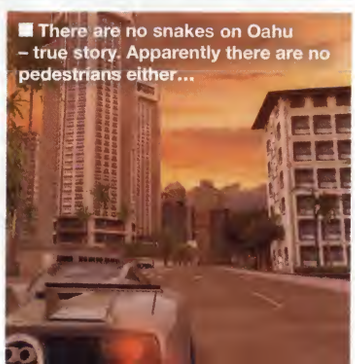
■ The stripes? Decorative. The skidmarks? Terror

■ "ACH! I spilled my macchiato!"

ALOHA!

Oahu is the third largest of the Hawaiian Islands and the most populous, with almost 900,000 residents and unemployed surfers (very few of whom own an Aston Martin). Around 5,000,000 tourists visit Oahu every year. They're mostly from Japan and the US mainland, although the former look uncomfortable when they're at Pearl Harbour, the latter take up two bus seats on the way there and neither group can speak Australian (they just look at you quizzically and grin). The good news? Your chances of seeing a Brown Booby on the beach are good (it's a bird – look it up).

■ Man, we're tyred of these captions



■ There are no snakes on Oahu – true story. Apparently there are no pedestrians either...

PROS:
- You love cars
- Is cruising Hawaii a bad thing?

CONS:
- You hate cars
- You own a PS3

VERDICT: A unique and innovative street racer that puts the ailing series back on top of the competition.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 09

- **GENRE:** FLIGHT SIM
- **RELEASE:** APRIL 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** IR GURUS
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **RESOLUTION:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.irgurus.com

BACK STORY: *Heatseeker* is IR Gurus' attempt to bring the arcade back into the flight sim. With accessible controls and some innovative new features, this game hopes to reinvent a typically stuffy genre, by crossing speed, explosions, and more than a few super weapons.

HEATSEEKER

Seek and ye shall find?

Essentially a flight sim with a bad case of ADHD, *Heatseeker* is a game firmly aimed at people who like to blow crap up. So if you were that kid at school who was always flicking a lighter, with a maniacal smile, an indiscriminate twitch, and a gleam in your eye then this is the game for you. In *Heatseeker*, something always seems to be in the process of exploding, but unlike most games in the genre, this time you have a front row seat.

With the much vaunted 'Impact Cam', *Heatseeker* attempts to take gamers away from the blip shooting seen in other flight sims, and right into the guts of aerial combat. Instead of creating an unsatisfying, distant fart of an explosion every time you take an enemy down, *Heatseeker*'s impact cam cuts to a close up camera angle of your devastating handiwork, allowing you to watch with glee as the bad guys violently plummet to their fiery doom.

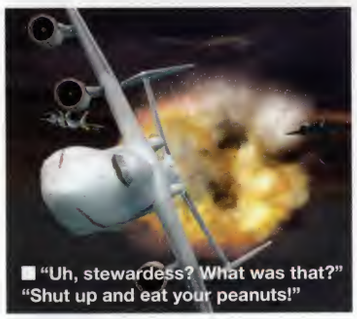
It's an interesting addition to the gameplay, but one which has a few problems that detract from the obvious, visual positives. During hectic gameplay, for instance, keeping track of numerous enemies simultaneously is essential, but this can be a little difficult if the camera chooses to cut away towards a random explosion. By the time you return to in-game play the bad guys have often flown off in the opposite direction, leaving you scrambling in their wake.

But to be fair, it never takes you long to catch up, mostly due to the insane speeds the game allows you to reach. *Heatseeker*'s development team openly admit that much of the inspiration for this game came from the *Burnout* series, and boy does it show. The sense of speed when chasing after enemies at full throttle is completely tangible. Its hard not to feel the adrenaline pumping when hurtling along at 500 km/h just above sea level, with shots flying past in all directions.

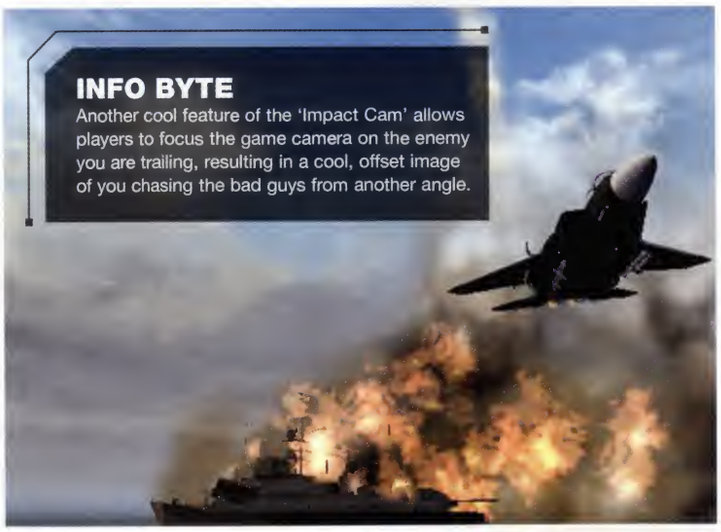
This sense of speed is what *Heatseeker* does better than any other flight sim on the market, but the game often falls foul to the pitfalls of other aspects of the genre. Making environments interesting is perhaps one of the biggest challenges in flight games, and although *Heatseeker* sports some pretty cloud effects, and great plane models, too much of the game takes place over water, and this often renders the environments negligible. This is especially apparent in earlier missions, which take place over huge expanses of water, with little more that a small island to break up the monotony of blue.

But ultimately *Heatseeker* manages to fulfil almost all of its initial promise. Its an accessible, fun, arcade-style flight sim, with an impressive sense of speed and balanced gameplay. Despite the 'Impact Cam' being more of a cosmetic update, as opposed to the evolutionary step forward we were hoping for, it is still a worthy addition to gameplay. If you are looking for a flight sim that doesn't bore you rigid, or even just a solid arcade shooter, then you need look no further. **Mark Serrels**

■ F-16 – one of the most versatile jets ever designed



■ "Uh, stewardess? What was that?" "Shut up and eat your peanuts!"



INFO BYTE

Another cool feature of the 'Impact Cam' allows players to focus the game camera on the enemy you are trailing, resulting in a cool, offset image of you chasing the bad guys from another angle.

■ F11 – one of the most versatile function keys on your computer keyboard

EVERYBODY FREEEEEEZE...

Heatseeker has its fair share of badass weaponry, such as your standard missiles, rail guns and the like, but every so often it cranks the shooting capacity up to 11 with some pretty jaw-dropping stuff. The EMP, short for Electro Magnetic Pulse, is our favourite. Firing this weapon at a ship, for example, will instantly disable all enemy turrets and missile launchers, allowing you to casually swoop in for the kill, taking out the lumbering hunk of metal in your own sweet time.

■ He's dropped more bombs than the creators of the *Scary Movie* series!

■ "I call my crotch the 'Danger Zone'. Danger to whom? The ladies..."

■ "Bail out! Wait... this eject button is painted on–" BOOM!

PROS:
- Huge array of jet-fighters
- Faster than Superman on crack

CONS:
- Dull environments
- No multiplayer in PS2 version

VERDICT: A fun, updated throwback to the arcade shooters of yesteryear.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 07

- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT MONTREAL
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **RESOLUTION:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.tmntgame.com

BACK STORY: Ubisoft Montreal certainly has a diverse portfolio. With both the *Splinter Cell* and *Prince of Persia* franchises under its belt, and several forays into all-ages action/platformers and movie tie-ins, it looks like *TMNT* is somewhat of a blend of all its previous titles.

TMNT

Um... Cowabunga dude?

"Like, dude! Break out the pizza! Whoa! There's The Shredder!! COWABUNGA! Er, why is Vanilla Ice in this movie?" These are probably the first things that pop in your head when you hear the words 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles'. That's right! The TMNT are back! But is this going to be a cut above the rest or just half-baked and destined to disappear into obscurity?

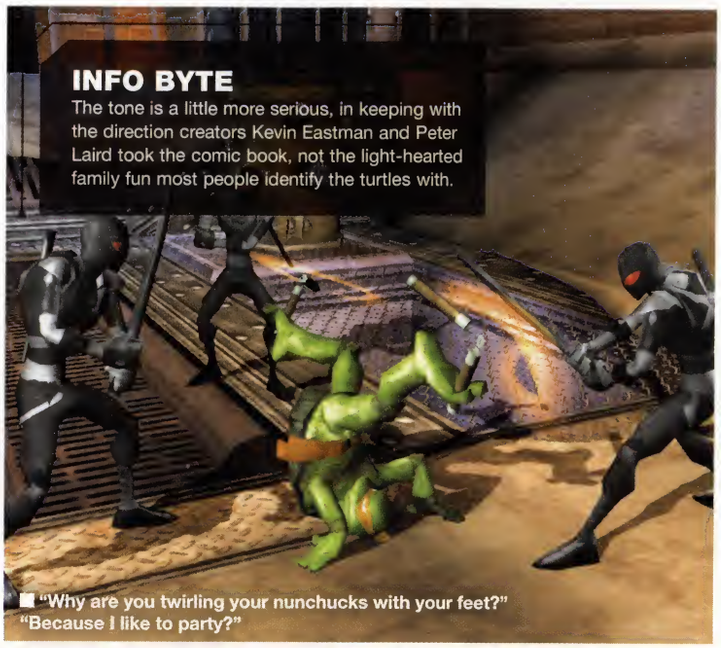
We are pleased to say, that this is a really fun one to play. It hearkens back to the '80s four-player arcade game that was a piece of piss to play yet consumed us for hours on end [*You mean, aside from the fact that it's single player only? – Ed.*]. In fact, whenever we have a gaming night and hit the classics, we regularly dust off the original. Until now that is. There's a new contender and it packs quite a punch.

The first few missions give you some background info on each turtle and how to play him. Each story's introduction is told via comic book panels, which is a nice touch and really helps set the mood. It's a welcome change to the almost obligatory training levels that most games have nowadays. By the time you start up against your archenemies The Foot Clan, you'll be well familiar with what each of your boys can do. Most moves are the same, but obviously, the sai and nunchaku are faster, the bo staff and twin katana are slightly slower, but have more range. Each dude has a Van Damme-style mid-air split kick, and a jump. If you hit attack mid jump, your guy performs an acrobatic slow motion spin move, complete with the pre-requisite neon speed lines, and then slams the ground below with such force, it stuns those below and looks really freakin' cool too. The slo-mo hits don't stop there either. If you string together ten kills without taking a hit, you power up, the camera zooms in on you and the whole screen goes into bullet time. Now you can take out any enemy (except bosses) with a single punch, kick or weapon strike.

Gameplay switches between kung fu and traditional platforming. The turtles' motion is extremely intuitive and has an incredibly smooth flow to it. It really wasn't what we were expecting – but in a good way. You'll be getting your *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* on in no time.

The best part is that you can tag team and use any turtle at any time. Hitting ◎ gives you team moves that might be a powerful atomic drop, an extra boost to get over a long gap or high wall, or just an excuse to pick your favourite turtle and whup some ass.

These new turtles ain't no joke, and though it sorely misses two-player or four-player co-op, we'll consider this the triumphant return of our favourite "heroes in a half shell". **Dave Kozicki**



INFO BYTE
The tone is a little more serious, in keeping with the direction creators Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird took the comic book, not the light-hearted family fun most people identify the turtles with.

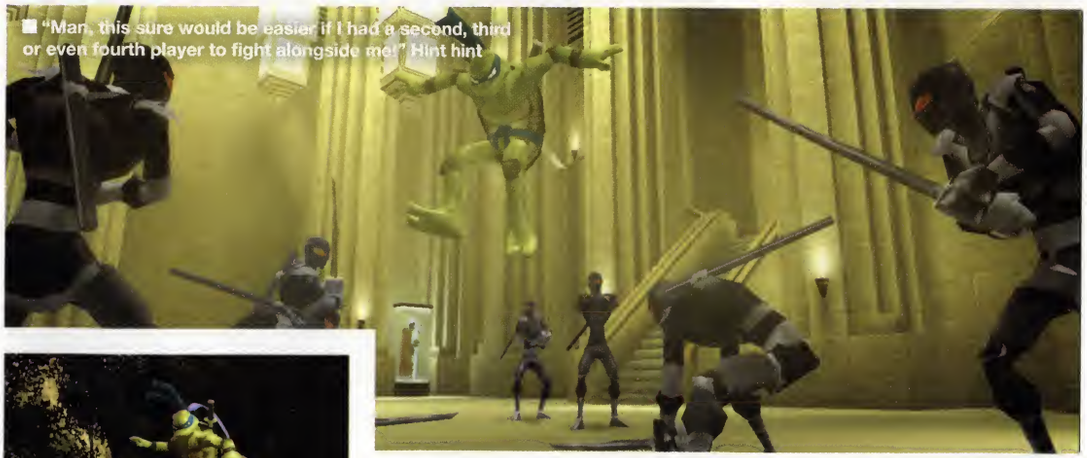
■ "Why are you twirling your nunchucks with your feet?" "Because I like to party?"

TURTLE POWER

Each of the turtles has a unique ability that you can utilise by hitting L1. Raphael can dig his sais into certain walls and climb, Donatello can use his staff to propel himself across large gaps, and Leonardo can teleport through gates using his superior meditation skills. The coolest is Michelangelo, who can spin his nunchaku so fast that they become mini helicopter blades, allowing him to gain access to areas far out of the others' reach.

■ Ubisoft's King Kong makes an appearance (not really)

■ Foot soldiers – they always 'toe' the company line



■ "Man, this sure would be easier if I had a second, third or even fourth player to fight alongside me!" Hint hint

■ Next up from Ubisoft: *Master Splinter Cell* (not really)

PROS:
- You love nostalgia
- Solid platforming action

CONS:
- You prefer *Battletoads*
- Single player only? Boo!

VERDICT: *TMNT* offers plenty of action and some slightly frustrating platforming, but enough fun for fans.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 07

dbm™

COOL GAMES

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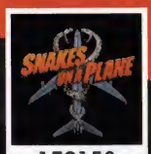

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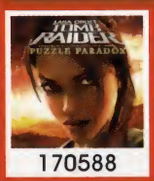
RINGTONES

CHART	TRUE	MP3	POLY
Lips Of An Angel	173754	----------	171933
How To Save A Life	173701	173712	171921
Say It Right	173642	173373	171900
Ain't A Scene Its An Arms Race	173750	173755	171929
Smack That	173450	173459	171839
Light Surrounding You	173337	----------	171813
Rock This Party	173314	173320	171801
Put Your Hands Up For Detroit	173345	173352	171815
Fergalicious	173586	173590	171882
Irreplaceable	173335	173342	171811
Tell Me	173598	173608	171890
My Love	173362	173363	171823
Too Little Too Late	173546	173552	171877
Welcome To The Black Parade	173304	173328	171796
Wind It Up	173592	173602	171884
I Don't feel Like Dancing	173243	173247	171772
Funky Tonight	173672	----------	171908
Famous Last Words	173751	173756	171930

FAVOURITES	TRUE	MP3	POLY
Another Brick In The Wall	178920	177911	172017
Stuck In the Middle With You	177010	177999	----------
Eye Of The Tiger	177280	----------	172028
Born Slippy	177254	177896	171048
Lust For Life	178718	177715	----------
Smooth Criminal	178834	177765	----------
Maneater	177846	177851	171673
Wish I Was A Punk Rocker	177603	177608	171661
Summer Of 69	178175	177559	172124
Mr. Brightside	177082	173488	----------

ROCK	TRUE	MP3	POLY
Back In Black	178495	177492	----------
Walk This Way	178499	177491	172059
Poison	178504	177495	----------
Livin On A Prayer	178561	177537	----------
Sweet Child Of Mine	178709	177706	172138
Smells Like Teen Spirit	178897	177778	171107
All The Small Things	178549	177521	171021
Stairway To Heaven	178780	177753	----------

REAL SOUNDS	REAL
Stifler - Stiflers Back Baby	173610
Captain Jack Sparrow	173620
Napoleon Dynamite - Freeking Idiot	177920
Scarface - Say Hello To My Little Friend	177924
Donald Duck Getting A BJ (Hilarious)	178056
Madagascar - If You Have Any Poo Fling It Now	173665
Terminator - Come With Me If You Want To Live	173666
Pulp Fiction - Hmmm This Is A Tasty Burger	173667
Apocalypse Now	173659
The GREATEST Female ORGASM EVER!!	178031
Full Metal Jacket	178124



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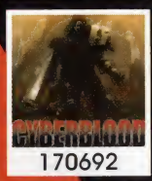

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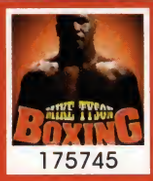

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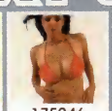
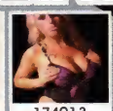
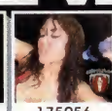
SEXY GIRL VIDEOS

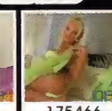
175467 Pink Bikini Tease


175246 Sexy Red Bikini

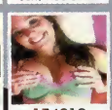

174913 Jodie's 1st Strip

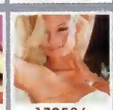

175056 Wet N' Wild

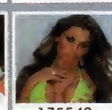
175460 Sexy Brunette Strip

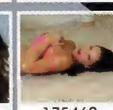

175466 Lime Bikini Babe

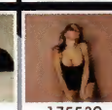
179480 Raunchy Blonde

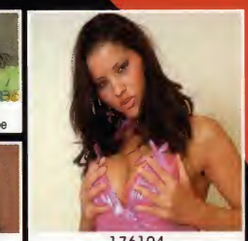

174910 Playful Tiffany


179586 Sexy Lucy

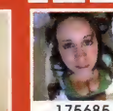

175542 Louise G's Skimpy Top


175462 Red Hot Brunette

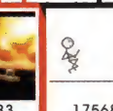

175539 Hot Louise G


176104 Brunette Teaser

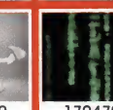
ANIMATIONS


175685 Boob Juggler

175683 Scarface Kitty


175686 Put Em' Up

176370 Sexy Symbol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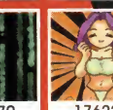
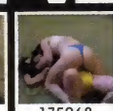
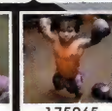

176223 Boob Bouncer

CRAZY VIDEOS

175262 Snake Bite

179833 Treadmill Breaker

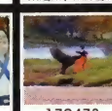

175268 Girl Scrap

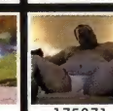

175265 Mighty Midget

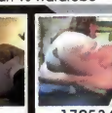
174197 Batman Vs Wardrobe

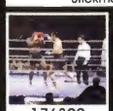
175535 Stickman War

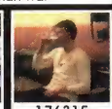
175532 Rollercoaster Horror


179473 Kung Fu Bear


175871 Fat Weirdo


170534 Fat Mamma


176302 Kickboxers Big Break

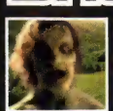

176315 Drink, Sick, Drink, Sick

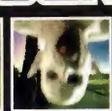
170253 Tazor Gun Fun

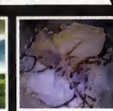
170251 Whale Vs Seal

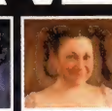
175266 Bitch Fight

SHOCKER VIDEOS

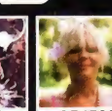

174128 Watch Out... Scary


174339 Scary Shock


175296 Spider Vs Reptile


175076 Nice Girl Turns Nasty

170720 Millipede Vs Mouse


174798 Look Out!

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PS3 **PS2** PSP

REVIEW

- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** AVALANCHE
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** FUNTASTIC
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **PRICE:** $49.95
- **RESOLUTION:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.buenavistagames.com

BACK STORY: We'd be surprised if you've even heard of the movie *Chicken Little*. As such it's possible that the game flew under your radar. With its new title Disney wants your undivided attention for this well-made children's game that will quite possibly surprise many...

CHICKEN LITTLE: ACE IN ACTION

PlayStation. BRONZE AWARD 8/10

It's actually really good...

In the gaming world, movie licenses and children's games are usually about as compatible as Germaine Greer and Larry Flint, resulting in the sort of limp fish that no self respecting gamer would touch with a proverbial barge pole. So its sort of nice, and more than a little bit surprising, to announce that *Chicken Little: Ace in Action* is actually an excellently executed, well-designed title.

Playing as the cast of Disney's *Chicken Little* movie, playing themselves as videogame representations of themselves in a crazy *Flash Gordon*-esque cartoon game world, *Ace in Action* succeeds mostly by taking some great ideas from other games and making them accessible for the game's target audience. Employing a variety of different game styles, *Ace in Action* has you on foot, in a tank, and even flying in space, but never feels like a jack of all trades. All aspects of the game are surprisingly water tight.

Playing as 'Ace' is quite probably the most balanced and fun part of the game. Working similarly to the *Ratchet and Clank* series, *Ace in Action* combines simple platform mechanics with some accessible shooting action. Controlling 'Ace' is initially a bit confusing, mostly due to the fact that you don't expect a kids game to have controls similar to an FPS, but the aiming system is extremely forgiving, and since it's pitched towards a younger audience, you will often find yourself breezing through most sections.

Other sections of the game, the flying sections in particular, have their control niggles, but in general all problems with the game are minimal. The scope of the game is surprisingly broad, and everything *Chicken Little: Ace in Action* attempts to do, it does in a well-designed, wonderfully polished manner. Developers of even the most poe-faced titles could learn a lot from this 'kids' game; its difficult to keep a smile from your face during play, *Ace in Action* practically defines fun.

Add to this the awesome array of voice talent and you have yourself one of the best kids games on the market. Adam West in particular is genuinely hilarious as 'Ace', in a camp turn that would make William Shatner weep into his martini. In addition, all the cast from the original Disney movie have returned, which speaks volumes about the game's high production values: *Ace in Action* is not the lazily developed cash cow you would expect from such a license.

Chicken Little: Ace in Action is undoubtedly one of the best kids games on the market, but to exclusively limit this game to children would be unjust, because like the *LEGO Star Wars* games, this is a game that adults should be able to legitimately play and enjoy without embarrassment. In short, if you have kids, this game is almost a must-buy; if you don't, well... you can always hide it next to your pornography collections when guests come over... it's a seriously guilty pleasure. **Mark Serrels**

CONFUSED? YOU SHOULD BE.

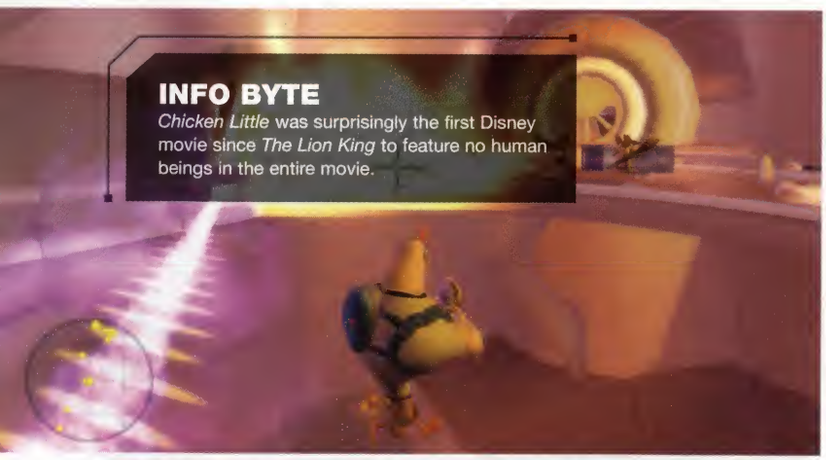
Playing *Chicken Little: Ace in Action* without any prior knowledge of the movie (that will quite probably be about 90% of you) can initially be a bit confusing; thanks to some crazy Disney post-modern jibberish that takes a little bit of getting used to. Instead of playing as Chicken Little himself, *Ace in Action* actually has you playing in a sort of 'game within a game' scenario. You actually play as Chicken Little playing a videogame representation of himself. Each of the characters from the original movie are given the same treatment, which basically means that instead of playing as the collection of animal freaks from the original movie, you are actually playing as superhero versions of the original cast. Confusing? Yes. More fun in the long run? Also yes.

Space combat? Sweet!

"Y'know, the ladies who know me call me Chicken *Extra Large*..."

Tank combat? Sweet!

A fun kids game that isn't made out of LEGO? Whodathunkit?



INFO BYTE

Chicken Little was surprisingly the first Disney movie since *The Lion King* to feature no human beings in the entire movie.

What do lonely roosters sleep with? Rubber chickens

PROS:
- Consistently fun and accessible
- Brilliant voice acting cast

CONS:
- A little bit easy in parts
- Can be a little linear

VERDICT: This game is so much fun it's almost worth having kids just so you've got an excuse to buy it.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 08

- **GENRE:** SPORTS
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** EA
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4 (WITH MULTITAP)
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **RESOLUTION:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.easports.com.au

BACK STORY: We reckon EA knows its way around the odd sports title. EA has taken it up a notch with the EA Sports Big titles, reinventing popular sports with a fresh new twist, like the massively fun *SSX* series, and, of course, the *NBA* and *NFL Street* franchises.

"Hut! Hut! I wanna go to *Pizza* Hut! C'mon, I missed lunch over here..."

"Hey, watch the End Zone there, buddy!"

"I'll show you a stiff arm..." [unzipping sound]

The Superbowl? What's that? What Superman eats his cornflakes out of?

INFO BYTE
The Gamebreaker system has been reworked so that you can add a little oomph to any move, be it a crunching tackle, soaring steal or a humiliating little shake 'n' bake.

NFL STREET 3

PlayStation. BRONZE AWARD 8/10

Take the ol' pigskin to the streets, y'all!

Man, oh man, do we love anything that's sports related with the word "Street" in its title. Trust those crazy bastards at EA to blow the dust and cobwebs off the stuffy sports genre. It's like EA watched *White Men Can't Jump* and had an epiphany. "Hey, we can make a basketball game that's ridiculously over the top, a tonne of fun to play, and maybe grab a few bucks on the side."

Not satisfied with the wildly successful *NBA Street*, EA then turned to American football, and gave it a much-needed booster shot in the arm. It's not that we don't dig NFL. We do, but sometimes you just want to jump right in and get amongst it. EA has once again answered the call with the third instalment of *NFL Street*, so put your game face on, practise your showboating, and get ready to dance in the In Zone all night long.

This is all about style, flair and panache. You got to have it, flaunt it and rub your opponent's nose in it. Whether on offence or defence you've got to look good. How else can you expect to take on the pro's?

NFL Street 3 really does a great job of mixing up the modes of play for you. It's not just as straightforward as lobbing a Hail Mary and celebrating. Sure, exhibition games are available for a quick play, but to advance through and gain the respect of your peers, you've gotta work for it. As you best other teams, you'll come across a variety of challenges. Some involve rushing for a certain amount of yards, others have you battling against the clock, some give you four offensive plays, and if you fail to convert, that play is eliminated from your repertoire and continues until one team is left with, literally, no offence. They really mix it up to keep you on your toes.

New to the series is the ability to take to the air (see 'UP, UP AND AWAY'), and there's a whole mess of tricks up your sleeve. What we really like are the spin moves, dives and stiff arms when attacking, and in defence you can leap for intercepts or hammer the blockers into another time zone. Hitting L1 while performing any of these gives you bonus "style" points. Hey, why not look good as you're streaking away for a touchdown. It's pretty freakin' sweet.

NFL Street 3 is well worth a look. It's a hard-hitting, high-flying, smack-talking gem of a sports title that wont rest until you're number one. **Dave Kozicki**

"Put your game face on, practise your showboating, and get ready to dance in the End Zone all night long."

Wall running with a football – he's like the *Fresh* Prince of Persia

PROS:
- It's NFL and it's fun
- Sacking a QB never gets old

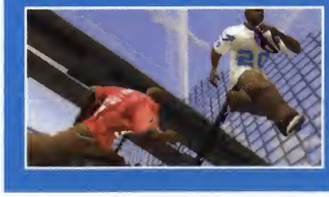
CONS:
- You're all about NRL
- You prefer realistic sport sims

VERDICT: Break out some apple pie and indulge in a tasty slice of Americana. On steroids.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 08

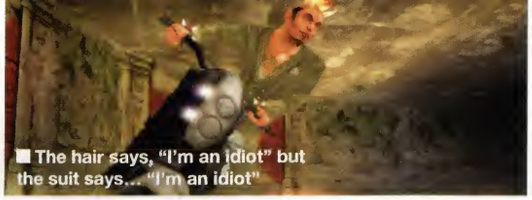
UP, UP AND AWAY

Ever wondered what football in *The Matrix* would be like? We think it'd be a little like this. As you approach any of the strategically placed ramps or barrels, hit ⊗ to jump. Just as you land hit jump again for a double jump, which is useful for making defenders your bitch. You can also jump onto walls, and pressing up on the right analogue let's you run along it. By the way, if we're picking teams? We totally call Neo first, okay?



PS3 **PS2** PSP
REVIEW

- **GENRE:** RACING
- **RELEASE:** JANUARY 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** CLIMAX
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** FUNTASTIC
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **PRICE:** $49.95
- **HD:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.evolvedgames.com


■ The hair says, "I'm an idiot" but the suit says... "I'm an idiot"

■ We can do that

CRUSTY DEMONS

Crusty by name, crusty by nature

■ ...and that

■ Not that though, dude has mad skills...

What is there to say about a game like *Crusty Demons*, without using the many expletives that you will inevitably use if you are stupid enough to waste your money on this shoddy game? An extreme sports title in the vein of the *Tony Hawk* series, *Crusty Demons* is the worst kind of game; an unoriginal, lazy mess attempting squeeze in on a crowded market created by several other vastly superior titles.

Never has a videogame's title better reflected the nature of the contents within. Everything about *Crusty Demons* is... well, crusty. The archaic, unimaginative game design is crusty; the jagged, ancient graphics are crusty; and the frustrating, unforgiving control system is crusty. If you could sum up this game in one word it would be 'crusty'. Another word would be 'shithouse'. We're not kidding.

Perhaps we are being a bit unfair, the problem with *Crusty Demons* isn't necessarily how bad it is (believe us, its bad), but the cynicism with which this game was deliberately and lazily cranked out of the production line. Many games have attempted to imitate the *Tony Hawk* franchise with varying results, but never has a game so blatantly attempted to rip-off another like *Crusty Demons*.

Not only does absolutely everything in *Crusty Demons* play exactly like *Tony Hawk*'s brain damaged cousin, it's also burdened with the production values of an Albanian soap opera: sub-par voice acting, piss-poor graphics, glitch-tastic gameplay, the list goes on. If *Crusty Demons* came out five years ago it might have gotten a pass, but in 2007 with design mechanics that are beyond dated, a game like this is difficult to forgive. **Mark Serrels**

PROS:
- You need a new coaster
- You long for the days of *THPS2*

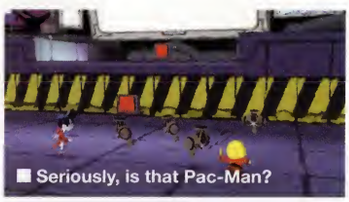
CONS:
- You like even a semblance of originality in your games

VERDICT: Crusty.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 03

PS3 **PS2** PSP
REVIEW

- **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **HD:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.konami.jp


■ Seriously, is that Pac-Man?

■ Maybe it's Charlie Brown, only jaundice made his skin yellow...

■ How would Charlie Brown get jaundice though? We guess Peppermint Patty might have had hepatitis...

XIAOLIN SHOWDOWN

Fighting monks. An evil boy genius. A bunch of robots. Bored now.

■ Either way, somebody's gonna sue somebody...

First up, *OPS* would like to say we firmly believe there's nothing wrong with cute. After all, the cartoon on which this game is based is positively brimming with cute characters. No, it's not the saccharin feel or look of *Xiaolin Showdown* that'll have you rolling your eyes (although the "informative dragon" is right up there at the front of the 'deserves-a-punch-to-the-neck' queue along with that talking paper clip from Microsoft Word – ugh!) put simply it's not very good.

And when cute is all you have... you've not got much.

The graphics are simple, using lots of primary colours, and simply animated characters. The gameplay, which admittedly allows four-player beat downs, just isn't any fun.

You see, it's hard to do anything. Pulling off moves to smash endless waves of robot foes can be cool if the controls are intuitive and produce amazing results where stuff explodes in incandescent mushroom clouds of wanton destruction.

If, on the other hand, it's hard to aim, the buttons are configured oddly and the moves are never more spectacular than throwing some kiddie-friendly ninja star... interest dwindles within minutes.

Perhaps the very young might find some joy in this repetitive, pointless (but cute!) brawling adventure, but it's pretty doubtful. Sad to say that not all the games coming out in the last wave of PS2 titles are good. In fact some are downright lame. *Xiaolin Showdown* is a good example of a title you need not waste your time on. Even if this came with a free monkey we'd pass. A free monkey! **Anthony O'Connor**

PROS:
- Cute is enough for you. You probably own many cats

CONS:
- It's shallow and lacking
- Hard to control

VERDICT: Offers little in the way of anything other than a long future as a beer coaster.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 03

- **GENRE:** STRATEGY/FPS
- **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** GEARBOX
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2 (Wi-Fi)
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **GAMESHARE:** NO
- **WEB:** www.gearboxsoftware.com

BACK STORY: Gearbox Software is a development studio with a tradition of assisting other studios, such as Valve Software (*Half-Life*), with cross-platform conversions. Its *Brothers In Arms* franchise is notable for injecting a human element and strategy into the WWII FPS genre.

BROTHERS IN ARMS: D-DAY

Just like a B-Day, but with less cake and more Axis forces

Brothers In Arms: D-Day continues to follow Sergeant Matt Baker and Corporal Joe Hartsock as they're deployed into France in the 101st Airbourne, in the big push to drive the Axis forces back to Germany during the Normandy invasion. Through cut-scenes and in-game dialogue, Gearbox manages to flesh out some very human characters that struggle to fit into their role as soldiers in the turmoil and chaos of the last stretch of the WWII campaign.

The core of *BIA: D-Day* is the tactical action. Whenever you encounter Nazi opposition, the most efficient way to dispatch them is to first get some of your forces to lay down suppressing fire. A foe that has been suppressed can't fire back or manoeuvre as effectively, and is prone to being outflanked. Enemy troops will actually display a meter over their head to show their level of suppression, with a red dot showing an active threat, while a grey dot indicates a suppressed unit. While the opposition is pinned down, you can then send other troops to flank and pick off the Axis forces easily. To keep tabs on the battle, you can press the select button at any time to shift into 'Situational Awareness' mode that gives you a zoomed out, RTS-style perspective on the battlefield, affording you a bird's eye view of the terrain and infantry elements.

Visually, the game is fairly inconsistent. Character models look quite good under close inspection, but the fact is that you're looking at them from a distance through the sights of your rifle for ninety percent of the time. Environments on the other hand are extremely basic, and in piecing together obstacles to negotiate for combat, you're presented with some very basic, low-poly environments adorned with low resolution textures.

Sadly, after you've sussed out the controls over the first couple of levels, you've pretty much experienced most of what the game has to offer. As you progress through the single player campaign, you're basically presented with wave after wave of half a dozen German troops that have to be suppressed, outflanked and eliminated. Going through the motions of the same formula over and over gets tired pretty quickly.

There is also a Skirmish mode which presents a series of objective-based challenges that can be played from either the Allied or Axis perspective. These can be played solo for a quick fix of tactical action, or co-operatively with a pal via ad-hoc wireless play.

Brothers In Arms: D-Day presents an interesting tactical approach to the WWII shooter and great cinematic presentation, but ultimately falls short of the mark by serving up the same slow, repetitive combat throughout the game, from start to finish. Even those that like a strategic slant to the proceedings will be hard pressed to get their money's worth out of it. Average, at best. **Nick O'Shea**

INFO BYTE

Each of the *Brothers In Arms* games follows the hardships of the same two American soldiers as they battle their way through World War II.

HELP! HELP! I'M BEING SUPRESSED

Another reason that *D-Day* fails to deliver on PSP is that one of strengths of the *Brothers In Arms* series is its atmosphere. Trading pot shots with a fistful of Krauts between rustic farm sheds doesn't really encompass the adrenaline-pumping terror of the largest conflict in history.

Bearing that in mind, Gearbox Software has the heavy artillery in reserve with *Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway* on its way to PS3. Powered by the Unreal Engine 3, *Hell's Highway* stays with the 101st Airborne as they engage the desperate Axis forces in Operation Market Garden across the battle-scarred Netherlands.

"See, I told you that you couldn't hit the side of a barn! Man, you're a really bad shot, Roy!"

"You guys go on up ahead. I'll stay back here and... uh... keep these photos of your wives... uh... from getting *stolen*..."

"My rifle is jammed!" "Just point it at them and shout, 'BANG!' You'd be surprised how often that works..."

PROS:
- More tactical than other shooters
- Believable characters

CONS:
- Fairly slow pacing
- Repetitive gameplay

VERDICT: Disappointingly inferior in comparison with its PS2 and PS3 counterparts. Average.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 05

PS3 PS2 **PSP**

REVIEW

- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** DEADLINE GAMES
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **GAMESHARE:** NO
- **WEB:** www.deadlinegames.com

BACK STORY: Denmark-based developer Deadline Games actually originated as a television production company in the early '90s. The company decided to enter the games market around the beginning of the PSone era and has worked across multiple platforms since.

CHILI CON CARNAGE

This chili needs a few more habaneros...

Most savvy gamers will remember 2005's action game, *Total Overdose* – a tale of a Mexican gunslinger that brought together a strange combination of gameplay elements from games like *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* and *Max Payne*. Around a year and a half later, Deadline Games looks to bring the hot lead fiesta to the PSP with the spicy *Chili Con Carnage*.

The core of the game is based in the story mode, dubbed 'El Gringo Loco'. The adventure is catalysed when the hero, Ramiro 'Ram' Cruz, bears witness to his father's grisly death in a combine harvester drive-by. Swearing vengeance on his father's grave, Ram sets out to bring some vigilante justice to the gangs for what they've done.

What follows is nineteen missions of double-fisted gunplay with plenty of hot lead flyin' and bad guys dyin'. With a range of modern weaponry at their disposal, players can score big points by disposing of their foes in the most stylish way possible, with a slo-mo dive to the side while dispatching one foe being good, and cartwheeling off a wall with a half pike and headshotting half a dozen hombres from fifty yards being very good.

Graphically, *Chili Con Carnage* is a visual feast, and definitely up there with the best-looking titles on PSP. On a technical level, it's tailor-made for the handheld environment, with minimal load times and instant level restarts that keep you in the thick of the action.

To further extend the lifespan of the game, there's El Macho Mode, which is a more freeform approach to playing the game, Style Challenges that set you the task of defeating your opponents using particular tricks, as well as two multiplayer modes that support up to four players. The most compelling Ad-Hoc option is Fiesta Mode, where each player plays a single player mode simultaneously, and in a similar manner to a puzzle game like *Tetris* or *Puzzle Fighter*, your big combos will spawn more enemies for your opponents to deal with.

On the down side, the PSP's analogue nub doesn't serve too well for aiming, and it really misses the second analogue stick that *Total Overdose* had on PS2. The control is given a healthy amount of auto-aim, but still ends up feeling a bit too twitchy, and there's no option to alter the sensitivity. Another issue is that the levels are fairly large, and you aren't given any map or guidance, so until you become familiar with the lay of the land, you can occasionally get lost, which slows down the action.

If you're willing to bear with the control issues, *Chili Con Carnage* has plenty of character, laughs and style, but most players probably won't be patient enough to persevere. **Nick O'Shea**

EXTRA HOT SOURCE

While *Chili Con Carnage*'s inspirations might be obvious to cinema buffs, it's worth mentioning as they're quality action films and well worth a look.

The chief influence is obviously Robert Rodriguez's *El Mariachi*, as well as the semi-sequel, *Desperado*. You might want to give *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* a miss though... Enrique Iglesias – not so good.

Anything that uses that much slo-mo obviously has roots in Hong Kong action films, namely John Woo's fantastic works *Hard Boiled* and *The Killer*, and you can even spot a few references to Tarentino's films in the cut-scenes, including *Reservoir Dogs*.

■ Does anybody agree that tacos are a real pain in the arse to eat?

■ Mexican food is great, but tacos? They're so difficult to manage...

■ They just break and leave you with crap running down your elbow

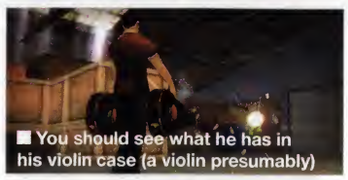
INFO BYTE

One of the great touches of *Chili Con Carnage* is its great use of black humour. Few titles to date have featured this degree of insanity with luchadores and poultry.

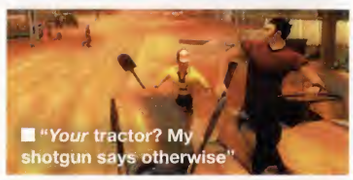
■ "AAARRGH! My heart! I'm not supposed to get bullets in it!"

■ Sure you can get soft tacos, but what's so different about that and a fajita? Meh, tacos are overrated...

■ These aren't the only pieces these ladies are packing...



■ You should see what he has in his violin case (a violin presumably)



■ "*Your* tractor? My shotgun says otherwise"

PROS:
- Sweet visuals, great load times
- Great sense of humour

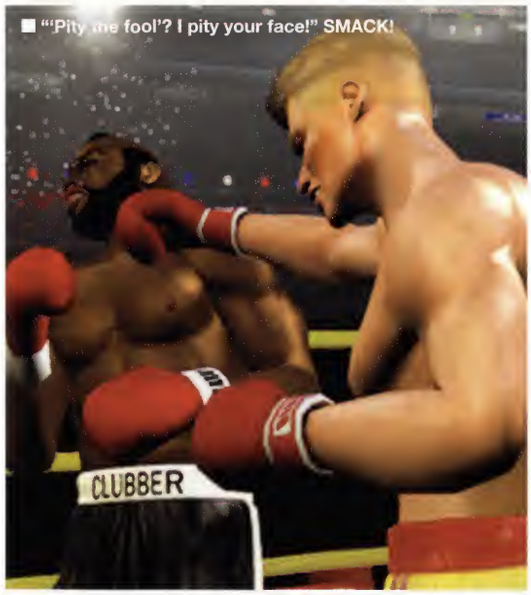
CONS:
- Controls are a little off
- Level pacing can be haphazard

VERDICT: Like a sniper smashed on tequila slammers, it hits a few bullseyes but misses the important ones.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 06

- **GENRE:** SPORTS
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2007
- **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2 (Wi-Fi)
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **GAMESHARE:** NO
- **WEB:** www.ubi.com

BACK STORY: Coinciding with the release of the movie, *Rocky Balboa* follows on from the previous PS2 title *Rocky*, by enabling you to play through the movie franchise all the way from the original movie, to the final fight with Mason Dixon in the latest film.



"'Pity the fool'? I pity your face!" SMACK!

INFO BYTE
Sylvester Stallone and Hulk Hogan have been best buddies since *Rocky III*, in which Hogan makes an appearance. Stallone inducted Hogan into the WWE Hall of Fame two years ago.

Dolph Lundgren: where is he now? No seriously – he owes us money

ROCKY BALBOA

Yer gonna eat lightning... and crap thunder...

Yes Stallone is older than your Grandad, and yes all of his recent movies have been complete suckfests, but if you are between the age of 20 and 30 and you don't even have the tiniest glimmer of excitement regarding the new *Rocky Balboa* movie, then something is seriously, seriously wrong with you. Yes it may be nostalgia at its worst, but we personally cannot wait till that soundtrack kicks in, and saggy old Stallone pulls on his gloves one last time, to give that young rapscallion Carver the majestic ass-whuppin' he so thoroughly deserves.

The game of the same name, on the PSP, trades on the same kind of nostalgia, giving fans of the movies a chance to play, and reminisce, through the most memorable moments of the *Rocky* franchise. Developed by Ubisoft, *Rocky Balboa* allows you to play movie to movie, fight by glorious fight, from the first bout with 'Spider' Rico from the original *Rocky*, all the way through to Mason Carver himself, from the recent *Rocky Balboa*.

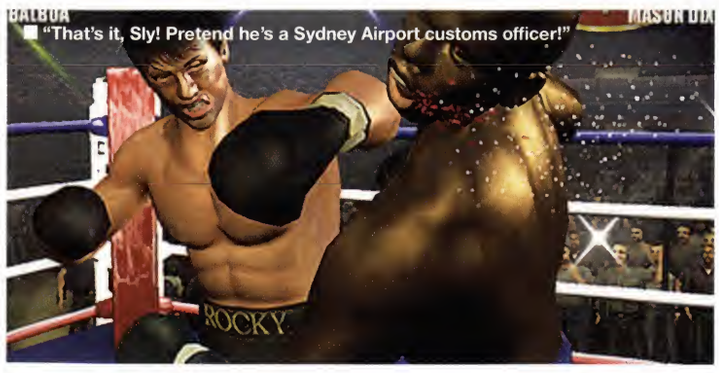
Even more impressively, each one of these boxers is playable in the exhibition mode, which allows you to set up fictional dream bouts to your heart's content. Ever wondered if the mighty Clubber Lang could have taken down Ivan Draco? Well now you can find out. Our prediction for the match? PAAAAIN...

The gameplay itself is solid, if unspectacular. Each button throws a different type of punch, while combinations of buttons allow players to throw power shots, such as uppercuts, and huge Rocky-esque cross body shots.

Each boxer, visually at least, is represented excellently. For some strange reason we got a weird fuzzy feeling when Apollo Creed 'danced' towards us in his Stars and Stripes boxers, and it's difficult to stifle a chuckle when Ivan Draco takes a kidney shot, in exactly the same cheesy way as Dolph Lungren does in *Rocky IV*.

So it's a bit of a shame that, despite the presentation, *Rocky Balboa* comes off as a shallow gaming experience. It's fun playing through each of Rocky's fights in chronological order, but the initial nostalgia eventually turns to disappointment as the lack of depth in the boxing mechanics is slowly exposed. The game seems to reward button bashing, and despite the fact that each boxer looks similar to their real life counterpart, playing as the light footed Apollo Creed, for example, doesn't feel all that different from playing as the comparitively sluggish Rocky Balboa. As a result the game gets quite repetitive disappointingly quickly.

In general the game just feels a little empty. There's no real training mode to speak of, and no way to develop your boxer. As a result there is no real reason to continue playing the game after the single player game is completed. For fans of the franchise, this game will be fun for, say, a couple of hours, but then reality hits home. Ultimately *Rocky Balboa* misses the opportunity to use nostalgia to create something substantial, and instead will likely only disappoint the diehard fans of the movie. **Mark Serrels**



"That's it, Sly! Pretend he's a Sydney Airport customs officer!"

"First name 'Mr', middle name 'period', last name 'T'!"

WHERE THE HELL IS THUNDERLIPS?

In what is perhaps the greatest gaming injustice in history, Hulk Hogan, AKA 'Thunderlips', AKA 'The Ultimate Male' does not feature in *Rocky Balboa*. Despite appearances from *Rocky* non-entities such as 'Spider' Rico and Flip Folsom it seems that Ubisoft didn't deem the Hulkster important enough to gain entry; fools... damn fools. Hogan is a legend, a wrestling god, and a 'real American'. If anyone deserves to take their rightful place as part of the *Rocky* legacy its good old Terry Bollea. Maybe next time Hulk... maybe next time.

PROS:
- Awesome selection of fighters
- Nostalgia is a powerful thing

CONS:
- Shallow boxing mechanics
- No training mode

OFFICIAL SCORE: 06

VERDICT: More Tommy Gunn than Apollo Creed, *Rocky Balboa* is ultimately a wasted use of the license.

PS3 PS2 **PSP**
REVIEW

- **GENRE:** MINI-GAMES
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** ZSLIDE
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2 (Wi-Fi)
- **PRICE:** $69.95
- **GAMESHARE:** YES
- **WEB:** www.zslide.com

HOT PXL

Too cool for school...

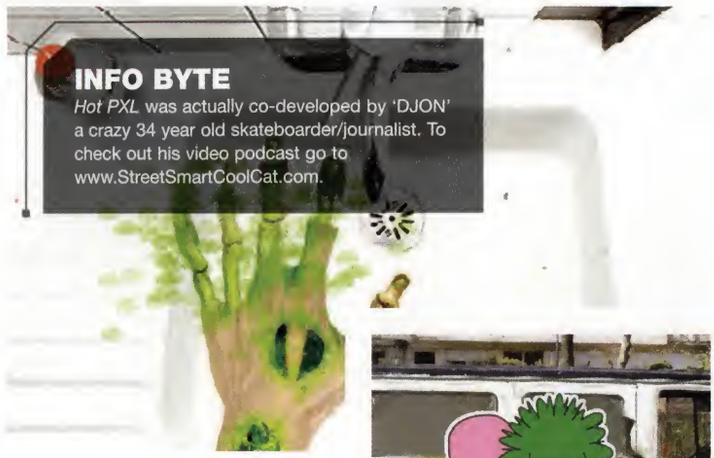
■ Here's a photo of our art guy Phil – believe it or not he designs this whole mag with textas

Damn those crazy kids and their incessant need to make things 'cool'. Can't they leave us alone and get back to their fancy mobile phones, with their baggy clothes, and their baseball caps round the wrong way. Can't they just stick to their hippity-hop music, and their skate-wheel-board thingies, and leave gaming to all us old fogeys? Apparently not, as Atari attempts to out-hip the hippest hipsters with *Hot PXL*, a game so sickeningly cool it actually has the power to physically stick it to 'the man' whenever it so desires.

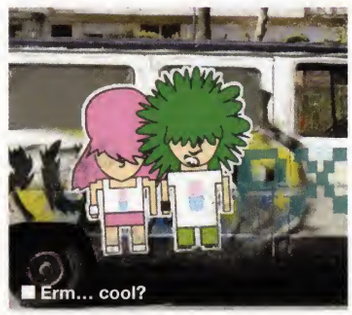
A collection of insanely fast mini-games, *Hot PXL* can actually be a lot of fun. The object of the game is to play through 11 mini-games, completing each task as quickly as possible, before facing a 'boss' level: another mini-game usually inspired by famous titles from Atari's rich history. Many of these bosses are reminiscent of classic games such as *Asteroids* or *Defender*.

It's a game perfect for portable gaming; some of the mini-games are old hat, some inspired, but you are constantly safe in the knowledge that the next game is but 30 seconds away. So if you are playing a stinker, something potentially fun is probably just around the corner.

It is, however, a game crafted specifically for the 'youth', and as such the whole thing tries just a little too hard to create that aura of 'cool'. Ideas, such as creating your own mini-game playlists, are interesting concepts, but the bizarre 'street' presentation often seems a bit self conscious, and ultimately a little irritating. There is undoubtedly a market for this sort of casual gaming experience, but we have a feeling that *Hot PXL* might have missed the target by being a little too cool for its own good. **Mark Serrels**



INFO BYTE
Hot PXL was actually co-developed by 'DJON' a crazy 34 year old skateboarder/journalist. To check out his video podcast go to www.StreetSmartCoolCat.com.


■ Erm... cool?

PROS:
- Brings out your inner teenager
- Some fresh, out-there games

CONS:
- It's a shallow experience
- Tries a little too hard to be cool

OFFICIAL SCORE: 07

VERDICT: Fun, but basically the gaming equivalent of an annoying, yet ultimately 'cool', smelly student.

PS3 PS2 **PSP**
REVIEW

- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** CLIMAX
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** TAKE 2
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4 (Wi-Fi)
- **PRICE:** $49.95
- **GAMESHARE:** YES
- **WEB:** www.2kgames.com/ghostrider/

■ *Ghost Rider* is developed by Climax. Heh-heh, 'climax'

■ Now that's what you call some 'hotwheels'

■ "They call me 'matchstick'" "Why – because you're head's on fire?" "No, because I have a tiny penis..."

■ But the real question is: when are we getting a *God of War* game for PSP?

GHOST RIDER

"Hello I'm Gho... OH GOD MY HEAD! IT'S ON FIRE!"

Hot on the blazing skid marks of the surprisingly enjoyable, if totally derivative (*God of War*, *Devil May Cry* and so on) PS2 game comes the even more surprisingly enjoyable PSP version.

These are not the same games. Whereas the PS2 version has five distinct zones (Hell, the desert, an old carnival, to name a few) the PSP version cuts these down into bite size chunks of eight levels a piece. You won't be exploring much but you will be whipping eleven varieties of poo out of the demons on earth. This is quite a canny idea as some of *Ghost Rider*'s (PS2, that is) levels are long and there's nothing worse than having to stop mid-level before a save point.

The graphics are a pretty close match compared to the PS2 version with suitably ghoulish monsters and special attacks. Plus this is one of those rare games that actually get better – and harder – as you go along. Hell you even fight the Scarecrow (of Batman fame). How's that for a crossover event?

Other baddies include demons, ninjas, killer clowns, wraiths, large bosses and... well, we'd hate to spoil the end.

Sprinkled in with all this fighting are the motorbike sequences. These aren't quite as polished as the fighting scenes and you'll often zig when you should have zagged – meeting an untimely fate.

The PSP version also features a Challenge mode where you just race other characters, multiplayer options and skins so that you can replay the game as other DC characters like Blade!

If you're comfy on the couch – well, stick with the PS2 version. Overall it's ultimately a slicker package. But if you travel a lot – or are about to go on holidays – *Ghost Rider* for PSP makes a perfect riding companion. **Anthony O'Connor**

PROS:
- Lots of beasties to chain-whip
- Short environments custom

CONS:
- It takes a while to get going
- The driving feels too light

OFFICIAL SCORE: 07

VERDICT: *Ghost Rider* is a big surprise. A nice brawler with lots of pretty explosions. Not deep, but who cares?

- **GENRE:** PUZZLE
- **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** Q ENTERTAINMENT
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** FUNTASTIC
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **GAMESHARE:** NO
- **WEB:** buenavistagames.go.com

BACK STORY: Based on a popular freeware game, *Every Extend Extra* plays much like an old-school shooter updated for a modern audience. Its fusion of music and colour attempts to reel in players who loved the simplistic thrills found in *Asteroids* and *Space Invaders*.

EVERY EXTEND EXTRA

Weird name... weird game...

With epilepsy-inducing art design and colour schemes that would have Japanese schoolchildren running for the hills, *Every Extend Extra* is the sort of game that could slowly drive you utterly insane. The game is a bit of a throwback, replicating the type of arcade experience that would swallow kid's allowances back in the day, with addictive gameplay and a fun look.

It really is an odd kettle of fish. Situated somewhere between *Rez* and the new PS3 puzzler *Blast Factor*, *Every Extend Extra* is an exercise in abstract game design. Controlling a bomb like device, it is your job to strategically detonate yourself, destroying as many bad guys as possible. Essentially you are the videogaming equivalent of a suicide bomber, without the resulting calamity and death, of course.

The aim of the game is as old school as it gets: get the highest score, and the best way to achieve this is by creating the longest chain of explosions. Basically, the more objects blown up with one single explosion, the higher the score, and this risk vs reward game mechanic works surprisingly well. Do you blow your wad early or do you wait patiently until there are a humungous amount of bad guys on the screen before detonating? Since contact with any of these enemies results in instant death, you spend much of the game frantically attempting to manoeuvre around hundreds of little blobs before mercilessly sending them to their infinite doom.

Every Extend Extra is the sort of title that seems tailor made for handheld gaming, and as such the game works well on the PSP. With numerous game types and simple controls, the game is well suited to short bursts of play. It does, however, seem to lack that 'one more go' spark that great arcade style games require, you never really feel compelled to give the game another try after dying. The need to beat your last score doesn't really exist and as such, the game's replay value is seriously reduced.

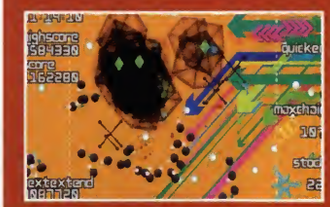
The art design is also fundamentally flawed, creating a steep initial learning curve which will inevitably turn off potential players. In addition, it seems the strange graphics seem needlessly tacked on as opposed to an organic part of the gameplay. Upon first playing *Every Extend Extra*, you will be hard pushed to tell the difference between the power-ups you are supposed to collect, and the bad guys you are supposed to be avoiding. This can result in a number of frustrating deaths.

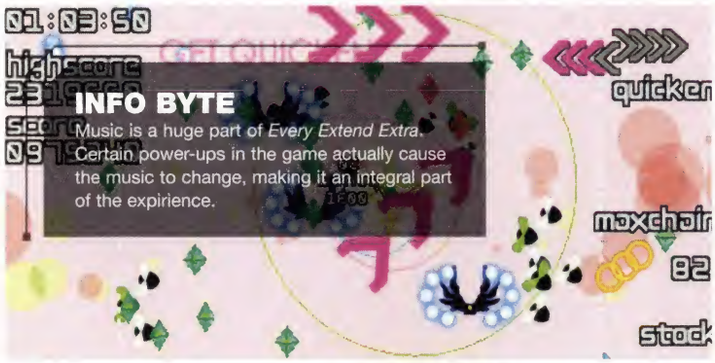
Sadly, these flaws stop the game from reaching the dizzy heights the concept was capable of. Some slightly more sensible art direction and some tweaked gameplay may have allowed *Every Extend Extra* to fulfil its potential, but as it is, it's just an average arcade puzzle game with an interesting twist. **Mark Serrels**

Due to the fact it's impossible to caption puzzle games we're going to use useless trivia to fill the voids instead

A FRESH COAT OF PAINT

In an attempt to keep the look of *Every Extend Extra* fresh, each of the nine levels looks completely different. Everything from the enemies, to the power-ups, to the explosive ship itself, completely changes its look from level to level. While this can be initially confusing, resulting in many needless deaths, it's quite interesting to see how insanely different each level is from the next. It doesn't really affect gameplay to any extent, but it looks cool nonetheless.





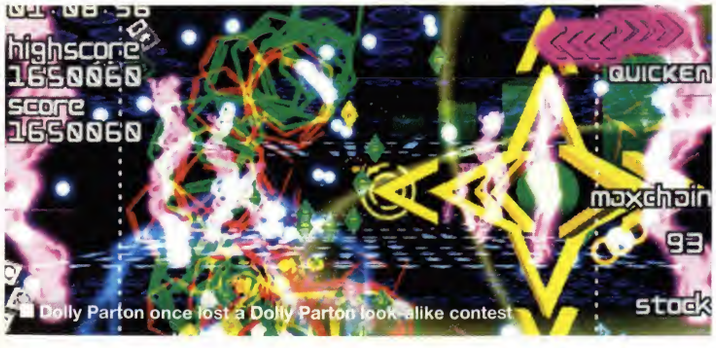
INFO BYTE
Music is a huge part of *Every Extend Extra*. Certain power-ups in the game actually cause the music to change, making it an integral part of the expirience.

Thomas Edison was afraid of the dark

There are as many chickens on this planet as humans

In England, the Speaker of the House is not allowed to speak

Ted Turner owns five percent of New Mexico



Dolly Parton once lost a Dolly Parton look-alike contest

Walt Disney was afraid of mice

PROS:
- Perfect for pick up and play
- Cool risk vs reward theme

CONS:
- Art design is often confusing
- Not really that compelling

VERDICT: Great attempt at mixing nostalgia with innovation that only slightly falls short.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 07

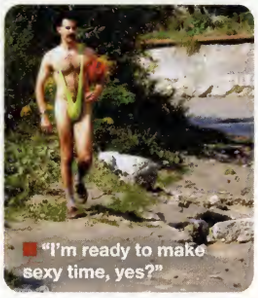
FILM

Sacha Baron Cohen lampoons the American populace in *Borat*, Daniel Craig reinvents the Bond franchise in *Casino Royale*, *300* redefines the blockbuster and more!

BEST BITS

"I blow jobs for free lift in motorcar"

"[illegible]nnice!"



"I'm ready to make sexy time, yes?"

DVD OF THE MONTH

BORAT (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: Larry Charles **STARRING:** Sacha Baron Cohen, Ken Davitian, Luenell

The Ali G movie (*Ali G Indahouse*) certainly had its moments, but ultimately it wasted the character by taking him away from his trademark awkward encounters with the unsuspecting public and dropping him into an entirely fictional story. It just wasn't as funny to watch knowing that everyone else was in on the joke.

Sacha Baron Cohen seems to have learnt from the experience; for his second movie he has unleashed another of his characters, Borat, onto a completely unaware American populace. Borat, a Kazakhstani television presenter, is commissioned to travel to New York to film a documentary about American culture. After catching an episode of *Baywatch* on late night television he goes rogue, heading west on a road trip across the US in an attempt to reach LA and "make sexy time" with Pamela Anderson.

What follows is a series of ridiculous situations that will have you laughing so hard your sides will split, milk will come out of your nose and you'll likely have an asthma attack at some point. Borat accuses a hapless housewife at a yard sale of being "a filthy gypsy", invites a prostitute to a dinner party (the other guests include a Southern minister) and sings, "Kazakhstan, greatest country in the world. All other countries is run by the gays" to the tune of the Star Spangled Banner in front of a crowd of redneck rodeo fans. And that's just for starters.

The Borat character is incredibly sexist and anti-Semitic (Baron Cohen himself is Jewish), but his personality is just a ruse in order to trap the American civilians. It's not Borat's prejudices that are outrageous, it's the fact that the prejudices go unchallenged by the bulk of his American interviewees that will have you both laughing uncontrollably at times and staring at the screen in disbelief at others.

"You have a nice face... can I touch it?"

VERDICT: It's smart social satire laced with plenty of lowbrow slapstick. It's crude, absurd, insightful and disturbing, and probably the funniest movie you'll see in years. High-five! **TO**

★★★★★

RODEO CLOWN

The rodeo scene is one of the funniest sequences in the movie, but it's also one of the instances where Baron Cohen's life could have been in serious danger.

At first the crowd was on his side, enthusiastically cheering his pro-Iraq war statements like, "We support your war of terror" and, "May Supreme Warlord George W. Bush drink the blood of every single man, woman, and child of Iraq", but the applause softened when he exclaimed, "May you destroy their country so that for the next thousand years, not even a single lizard will survive in their desert!"

Then after his off-key reworking of their national anthem, the crowd became incensed.

"If he had been out there a minute longer, I think somebody would have shot him," claimed one witness. For his own safety, Baron Cohen was escorted from the venue. And we thought lighting farts was a dangerous way to get a laugh!

DRAMA

MACBETH (MA15+)

- **DIRECTOR:** Geoffrey Wright
- **STARRING:** Sam Worthington, Victoria Hill, Gary Sweet, Lachy Hulme, Steve Bastoni

From the director of *Romper Stomper*, comes *Macbeth* – an ocker take on the seminal Shakespeare classic. Wright takes the tale from ye olde England to the underworld of present day Melbourne, padding it out with a solid local cast. It's odd to watch comedians like Mick Molloy and Bob Franklin playing it straight, and it takes some time to adjust to the use of Shakespeare's original dialogue, but it's compelling viewing – if only to see bucketloads of blood and a bunch of familiar faces taking on some of the most hallowed material in acting.

VERDICT: If Baz Lurhman hadn't got there first with *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* would be a lot more intriguing. Still, it's the kind of Shakespeare you'd get if Bill was a Tarantino fan and it's well worth a watch. **LR**

★★★

DRAMA

THE PRESTIGE (M)

- **DIRECTOR:** Christopher Nolan
- **STARRING:** Hugh Jackman, Christian Bale, Michael Caine, Scarlett Johansson

The Prestige is the story of two magicians, Alfred and Robert – fellow apprentices turned bitter rivals. When Alfred performs the ultimate magic trick, Robert tries desperately to find out the secret behind it. Robert's jealous obsession eventually leads down a dangerous path as the two compete both on stage and in romance, stealing ideas and discrediting one another – something that threatens to consume them both. With a fantastic script and incredible performances all around, *The Prestige* plays out like a magic trick itself – an entertaining exercise in misdirection.

VERDICT: A well crafted thriller, finely honed and faultlessly presented. On the back of gems like *Memento*, *Batman Begins* and *The Prestige*, Nolan is proving that he is a force to be reckoned with. **LR**

★★★★

TV

MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS – THE COMPLETE SERIES (PG)

- **DIRECTOR:** Various
- **STARRING:** John Cleese, Eric Idle, Graham Chapman, Terry Jones, Michael Palin, Terry Gilliam

Absurd comedy of the highest order, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* was truly ahead of its time. *Monty Python's Flying Circus – The Complete Series* contains all 45 episodes, from Owl-Stretching Time to The Spanish Inquisition and everything in between. No other comedy troupe in 35 years has come even remotely close to what Monty Python achieved in the field and their effects on modern comedy are abundantly apparent (any number of Monty Python's bizarre non sequiturs wouldn't be out of place in a modern comedy like *Family Guy*).

VERDICT: (It's...) perfect comedy. **LR**

★★★★★

ACTION

CASINO ROYALE (M)

- **DIRECTOR:** Martin Campbell
- **STARRING:** Daniel Craig, Eva Green, Judi Dench

Based on the very first Bond novel written by Ian Fleming, *Casino Royale* takes us back to the beginning of 007's career with the British secret service – his first missions and the initial development of his character. In spite of the vocal outcry from fans and critics that greeted his appointment to the role, Daniel Craig is possibly the best Bond yet, and easily the most multi-dimensional; he possesses both a soft side and a nasty streak that were never evident in Sean Connery or Roger Moore. The gadgets have been ditched (happily the cars and girls remain) and the film's action sequences seem old-fashioned and realistic compared with the effects-laden ridiculousness offered in the previous Brosnan flicks (*Die Another Day*, we're looking at you in particular). But although the final act of the movie goes on a bit longer than it probably should, you nonetheless get the feeling that Bond is back, and Craig's here to stay.

VERDICT: *Casino Royale* is a superb, character-driven action epic that proves there's still plenty of shakes and stirs in the series to come. **TO**

★★★★

QUENTIN TARANTINO APPARENTLY FIRST SUGGESTED A REMAKE OF *CASINO ROYALE* BACK IN 2004, AND WAS REPORTEDLY TALKING TO PIERCE BROSNAN ABOUT IT. WHEN BROSNAN GOT THE BOOT, TARANTINO WITHDREW HIS

ANIME

KARAS: THE PROPHECY (MA)

- **DIRECTOR:** Kei'ichi Sato
- **STARRING:** Demons, armoured warriors and several smartasses.

Coming across a bit like *Batman Begins* with a samurai sword, *Karas: The Prophecy* packs in more action into the opening credits than most anime's do in a whole damn movie. As the spirit world and our world overlap, demons are able to slip into our reality, and cause havoc. Lead by one of mankind's previous protectors, they are intent on dominating the human race. It's up to Karas, a mech samurai with a kick ass sword and fiery disposition, to save the day. As most battles take place beyond our senses, few realise the gravity or magnitude of the situation.

VERDICT: A fantastic mix of traditional anime and cutting edge CG, with a crazy ass storyline to match. Absolutely brilliant. **DK**

★★★★

ANIME

ERGO PROXY – VOL 1: THE AWAKENING (M)

- **DIRECTOR:** Shuko Murase
- **STARRING:** Some trigger happy Japanese robots

A popular Japanese television series, *Ergo Proxy* tells the tale of a futuristic utopian society, struggling to rebuild after an environmental catastrophe, on the brink of a robot revolution and dominated by government control. Submissive robots or "entourages" are becoming infected by a new virus and murdering citizens. As the police force combats these robots, a new threat emerges. A mysterious creature known as "Proxy" has escaped from an experimental facility. It may hold the key to mankind's survival and a chase begins to recapture it at all costs.

VERDICT: A little slow. Some nice visual touches here and there, but nowhere near as engaging as it could have been. **DK**

★★

TV

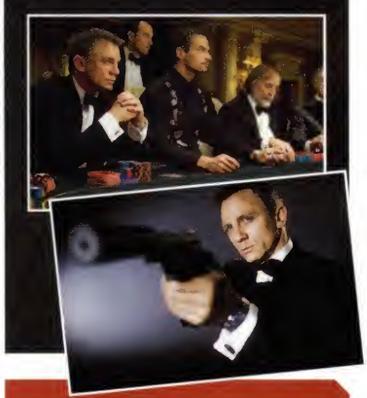
WALKER, TEXAS RANGER SEASON TWO (M)

- **DIRECTOR:** Various
- **STARRING:** Chuck Norris

Chuck Norris has always been the poor man's Stallone, who in turn is the poor man's Schwarzenegger, but he recently had a renaissance thanks to a bizarre Internet fad espousing that Chuck is the most manly of men on the planet. *Walker, Texas Ranger* is classic Chuck – roundhouse kick first, ask questions later. Every episode follows the same plot (apparently everyone in Texas knows karate), and the sound effects are laughable (tyres screech on grass, punches sound like falling trees) but overall it's naff fun... for a while.

VERDICT: If you get a buzz out of MacGyver reruns you ought to get a kick out of Walker, but it can be a little too unintentionally hilarious to bear at times. Best enjoyed in small doses. **LR**

★★★



NEXT MONTH...

SAW III
Eragon
Happy Feet
Night at the Museum
The Holiday
Blood Diamond
Deja Vu
Flags of our Fathers
Scrubs season 5
... and the first reviews of the hottest Blu-ray movies!

"... well if King Leonidas jumped off a cliff, would you do that too?"
"Heck yes, Leonidas is the coolest. Wheeeee..."

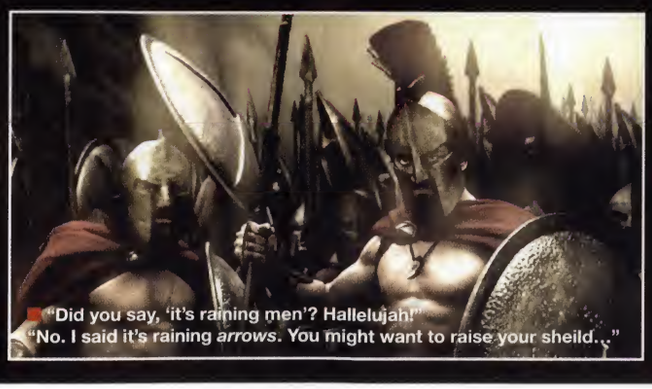
CINEMA

300 (R18+)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Zack Snyder ■ **STARRING:** Gerard Butler, Lena Headey

Based on the epic graphic novel by Frank Miller (*Sin City*), *300* is a brutal retelling of the Ancient Greek Battle of Thermopylae where 300 Spartans under King Leonidas were left to face the might of the entire Persian army and fight to the death. In the process they inspired all of Greece to unite against the Persians and drew a line in the sand for democracy. A mix of live action against virtual backgrounds not unlike *Sin City*, *300* is dripping with style and overflowing with incredible action. Opens April 5

"No buts, kid – you're coming with us," said Brad and Angelina



"Did you say, 'it's raining men'? Hallelujah!"
"No. I said it's raining *arrows*. You might want to raise your sheild..."

ALSO SHOWING

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (PG)

■ **STARRING:** Patrick Stewart

The Turtles return to save the world. CG animated, *TMNT* has more in common with the original comic. Opens April 5

SUNSHINE (Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Rose Byrne

A sci-fi thriller from *28 Days Later* director Danny Boyle, a crew travel into space to save our dying sun. Opens April 12

ZODIAC (Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Jake Gyllenhaal

The new thriller from director, David Fincher (*Se7en*, *Fight Club*) about a serial killer known as the Zodiac and his San Fransisco killing spree. Opens April 19

GRINDHOUSE (R18+)

■ **STARRING:** Kurt Russell

From irrepressible directors Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez, *Grindhouse* is a double bill of thrillers that recall both filmmakers' favourite B-movies. Opens March 22

BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad

HOBBIT HOPES

New Line chairman Robert Shaye is looking to move forward on *The Hobbit* – without Peter Jackson. The studio will shoot for a 2009 release for the prequel to *The Lord Of The Rings*. Rumour has it Sam Raimi (*Spider-Man*, *Evil Dead*) will assume directing duties.

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

Dan Aykroyd is developing a third instalment of the *Ghostbusters* series. Aykroyd revealed that the film will be CGI and that Bill Murray had agreed to reprise his role and provide the voice for Dr. Peter Venkman. This would be great news if it weren't for the fact Aykroyd has been banging on about *Ghostbusters III* ever since *Ghostbusters II* way back in 1989. Worse still, there's no official word of any studio on board the project yet – so we'll believe it when we see it.

HIGH FIVE!

Sacha Baron Cohen has signed on for a sequel to the hugely successful *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* (our DVD of the month) Cohen's next film is set to be based on another one of his characters from *Da Ali G Show*, Bruno (a gay Austrian fashion show host) for Universal Studios, but he will then return to 20th Centruy Fox for the next Borat film. Although we're not sure how he's going to be able to keep up the Borat disguise after the success of the first film. "Yagshamash. My name-a Borat!" "Wait, aren't you that gay French dude from that NASCAR movie?"

HARD CASE

Tom Cruise and Ben Stiller have officially signed on to star in the buddy action film, *Hardy Men*, directed by Shawn Levy (*Night at the Museum*). A comedic take on *The Hardy Boys*, the popular series of mystery books produced between 1927 and 1979 about the adventures of teenage brothers Frank and Joe Hardy, *Hardy Men* will see the boys grown up and no longer on speaking terms, but forced to reunite for a case.

ULTIMATE PS3 GADGETS

This month we play-test the R2-D2 home cinema system

Plonk your remastered DVD of *Star Wars* in here and get ready to relive the magic like never before

R2's projector can't play distress calls from Princess Leia, but it will beam 80-inch, 800x600 images on the wall

Control the dustbin-alike bleeper with this Millennium Falcon-shaped remote. Sensors prevent R2 from walking off any precipices he may encounter too

R2 DVD2

■ **PRICE:** $4,000 (approx)
■ **WEB:** www.nikkor2d2.com

This had the *Star Wars* fanboys in the office weeping with joy – a home cinema system in a remote-control replica of R2D2. It's the second coming, surely? Load a DVD into the dock in the droid's chest and he limbos into position, then beams your selected movie onto the nearest screen or wall, using a built-in projector. With a remote control shaped like the Millennium Falcon, this can only be topped if someone makes a life-size Carrie Fisher 'bot with built-in surround sound, Bluetooth and beer fridge.

WATCH THIS!

■ **PRICE:** $TBC
■ **WEB:** www.sonyericsson.com.au

The Sony Ericsson MBW-100 watch looks normal enough, but thanks to Bluetooth it can interact with new models of Sony Ericsson phones. When you have an incoming call the watch will vibrate and show the caller ID on its screen. Cool.

Check out Australian T3 Magazine for the latest cool gadgets every month!

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HELP

RESISTANCE

Secrets found! Tricky bits solved! All you need to know to finish the PS3's best shooter!

"Hey Marv, do you ever get the feeling the humans don't want us here?"

"Hmmm, is this a forcefield or honeycomb?" ZAP!

YORK

1 The Gauntlet

You can forget about a tutorial to ease you into things, *Resistance* drops you straight into a scrap with the vicious Chimeran Hybrids. Proceed down the street, capping all the Hybrids with headshots where possible, and be weary of conserving your health as you won't gain the recharge ability until the beginning of the second level.

Once you get to the end of the street, make good use of all the cover in the area to take out the Hybrids guarding the house, both on the street and on the first floor balcony, and then head into the front door.

Head up the stairs and take out any Hybrids you encounter. Move through the balcony area and into a room at the back with a caved in floor. Drop down the floor and you'll find yourself in a room with the Intel Document #1.

Intel Document #1

Head back up through the hole you came down through, and then jump down the broken fire escape at the rear of the house (taking care to avoid the actual flames). At this point, head to the right down the alleyway and then turn into a little alley to the left where you'll find some 40mm grenade rounds for your carbine rifle. These grenades are vital for the cluster of Chimera you face at the end of this level, so make sure you don't use them for the time being.

Sweet, sweet grenades

Then head back the way you came and proceed down the alley where you'll grab the Bullseye rifle. Equip it, and 'tag and frag' the Hybrid enemies that attack from behind the barricades. Head up the small flight of stairs to the right to grab the ammo and grenades, then head back down the stairs and into the alley to the left to grab the Intel Document #2.

Intel Document #2

Continue down the street to the courtyard at the end. Hybrids will start flooding through the archway, so make good use of the 40mm grenades you grabbed earlier and blast them at their feet to scatter them like ten pins. A couple of grenades should be enough.

Head through the archway, but just peek around to the left where you'll see two Hybrids waiting for an ambush. You can either jump out and kill them yourself, or wait for your allies in the valley below to take them out. Jump down to where your allies are to finish the level.

Use your grenade launcher or regular grenades to blow away these Hybrids

2 A Lone Survivor

The good news is that your health can now regenerate to the nearest quarter! The bad news is... well; you're kind of half-alien. Proceed down the dry creek bed with your new ally, using the carbine to mulch the dozens of Leapers that attack. Eventually you'll find yourself at the base of a large building, with three Hybrids shooting at you from above. Take one of them out and the other two will retreat, then head up the stairs to find a box of grenades to your left and Intel Document #3. Grab them both and head into the doorway. Before you go upstairs, grab Intel Document #4 in the small room below the stairs.

Intel Document #4

Proceed up the stairs and take out all the Hybrids. When you come out the other side of the building, you'll be able to jump into the M-12 Sabertooth tank that's idling in the street below. From here to the end of the level it's virtually impossible to die, so just make your way in the tank to the end of the winding street, blasting the crap out of anything that moves (or doesn't move). Get all the way to the end of the street and you'll finish the level.

3 Spires

You're about to enter the most hectic fight so far. Firstly, deal with the three Hybrids that rush you at the start, then turn around and take the stairs to your left which leads to a walkway that takes you to Intel Document #5.

Intel Document #5

Rather than rushing down into the bus depot and getting shot to pieces, it's a smart move to head to the bank west of your starting position, and snipe the sentry gunners below while you're out of their range with a Bullseye tag.

Take out the gunners from long distance

Once you've done as much damage as you can from up top, head down and circle around the perimeter to mop up the rest, taking advantage of the explosive barrels where you can. Any sentry gunners you didn't kill from up top are best flanked and shot at from the side or behind. Once you've cleaned up all of the Hybrids in the area, two more waves will come over the walls. Jump onto the sentry guns and take out as many as you can – you can even retreat back to the roof of the bus station if you want to kill them from long distance and grab some health. When you've dealt with both waves, the level ends.

GRIMSBY

1 Fate Worse Than Death

Your efforts at the bus depot were for nought as you've ended up a prisoner in the Chimeran Conversion Center. Bummer. Fortunately the Chimerans aren't too bright, so they've neglected to confiscate your weapons. Idiots. Here you are first introduced to the Menials, the zombie-esque Chimera, but they're honestly not much of a threat because they're unarmed and slow-moving. Keep an eye over your shoulder when you enter each room as they have a habit of creeping up on you, but otherwise just put a couple of rounds into their skulls with your carbine rifle. It's also heaps of fun to shoot the ones carrying the spherical power cells. Because they explode. If you see some power cells in a stack of three, it's always worth shooting them because of the collateral damage they incur.

» Menials are easy to kill, but don't let them creep up on you

Proceed through the level until you encounter the first set of Hybrids. Take them all out, and then head down the first hallway to the left. Here you'll find a box of frag grenades, and Intel Document #6 in the bathroom to the left.

» Intel Document #6

Head back the way you came, and proceed onwards to a lift that takes you upstairs. Tag and frag the Hybrid on the gangway above you, drop down to the left and quickly do a 180 to take out the Menials behind you, and head out into the courtyard. Here you'll be introduced to the hovering mines. You'll notice them on the ground, so move slowly towards them and when they pop up you've got a couple of seconds to centre your aim and destroy them with one bullet. There are five mines in total in the courtyard, and once you've taken care of them all, grab the Hedgehog grenades to the right of the stairs, and the Rossmore 236 Shotgun to the left of them. Then head up the stairs.

» It's easy to miss the shotgun under the courtyard stairs

The level ends with a fight in a warehouse. Take out the Menials on the ground floor by remaining out of the room and letting them come to you, blowing their brains out with your Carbine rifle. Then switch up to the Bullseye and head in to take out the Hybrids. Don't worry if you take some hits as there is plenty of health in the area if you look around. Head up the stairs and through the door, and follow the winding path to the end of the level.

2 Conversion

Deal with the two Leaper ambushes by mowing them down with your Carbine rifle, then hit the switch to enter a room full of Chimera Cocoons. Creepy. At the end of this room there is a staircase leading down to a large room full of machinery... and enemies. Before you rush down the stairs, shoot the stacks of power cells to take out as many of the Hybrids and Menials as you can.

» Stay at the top of the stairs and take out as many enemies as you can

You can't take them all out from up here, so eventually head down and take care of the rest. When things have quietened down, search the place and grab all the ammo and health you can find. In the furthest corner opposite the stairs you came down you'll find a handy box of frag grenades. Grab them, then head through the door. Cautiously proceed down the tunnel and take out the Hybrid to your immediate right.

Once down on the platform, follow it around to the right and take out the Hybrids (be sure to take cover when they toss their Hedgehog grenades). After a few more Hybrids, Menials and hovering mines, you'll reach a switch that triggers the end of the level.

» It's easy to miss this pile of grenades and ammo hidden in the corner

3 Hunted Down

Take a second to watch the 'birth' of some Hybrid soldiers – awesome! Then head along until you reach an elevator, and ride it down to the seaside town below. Grab all of the ammo in the bar and the establishment next to it, but be weary of all of the mines in the area. In the second establishment you can grab Intel Document #7 on the counter near the rear exit. Exit through the rear door and turn left to take out the Hybrids, but then do a 180 to grab the grenades and shotgun ammo off the crates in the alley.

Head into the room at the end of the dock with the machinery. Once you attack one of the Hybrids in here, many more will appear, so immediately back out the way you came in and wait for them to funnel through the door so you can pick them off. Head back into the building and around to the left. You'll see a couple of flights of stairs heading up; go all the way to the top of them to grab Intel Document #8.

» Intel Document #8

Back down the stairs and out through the door at the bottom, you'll notice some

■ Man, this spider has balls...

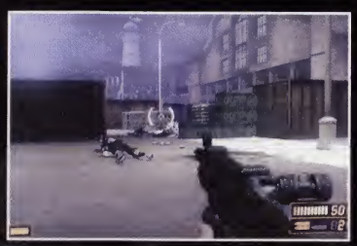
■ "Welcome to Earth" BLAM

There's only one real cure for ugly...

grenades on top of a large covered crate. Jump across to grab them, then head up the stairs to the right.

Yet even more grenades

Take out the two waves of Leapers that attack in the next room, then head down the stairs and into the lift that takes you up to the final battle in Grimsby.



Cover in this area is essential

After you exit the warehouse you've got no less than 16 Hybrids to deal with before you can make it to your ride outta here on the other side. The easiest way to deal with this area is to proceed down its right side. The left side is eventually blocked by huge containers, but the right side gives you clear passage and a wall to keep your back against (although look out for the small alley halfway along that contains a couple of Hybrids). At no time should you venture out to the middle of the area lest you become fodder for the sentry gunner, instead make your way down the right side, killing everything in sight, then hop up onto the flatbed trailer and up the ramp at its end, which gives you a great vantage point to lob a grenade down behind the sentry gun to take out the two Hybrids.

Drop down behind the sentry gun and three more Hybrids will rush you from the left wall of the area. Now's a great time to use the Carbine grenade launcher if you've got any rounds left, otherwise deal with them with the shotgun and head up the stairs on the left wall, across the plank walkway and exit the level.

MANCHESTER

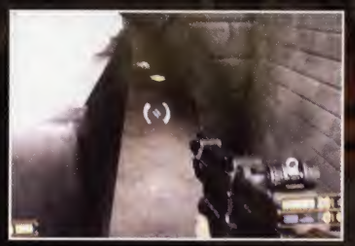
1 Path Of Least Resistance

This is where things jump up a notch. Take cover behind one of the broken concrete walls, and pop out and shoot, and repeat until all of the Hybrids are dead (you'll know it when an ally shouts, "Keep moving forward!"). Keep progressing down through the wrecked buildings, grabbing everything you can find and tossing grenades at Hybrids when they're in group clusters. Cover is the key throughout this entire sequence, and you can also seek higher ground in order to snipe with the Carbine or Bullseye from relative safety. Also, you've got to keep a close eye on your health, and take cover to let it recharge whenever you can.

Welcome to the war zone!

Don't be afraid to snipe

There's no Intel Document in this area to lookout for, so make your way through it to the street at the end, and then turn right. Follow the street around a couple of corners, and after some more Hybrids and a Leaper onslaught, you'll eventually reach a bridge littered with cars. Before you cross the bridge, head to the left and down the stairs underneath it to grab Intel Document #9 and some 40mm grenades.



Intel Document #9

Cautiously cross over the bridge and use the grenade launcher to take care of the two sentry gunners. Pick off the other Hybrid, and then equip the shotgun. Approach the Cathedral at the end of the street and a Howler will climb over the wall and rush at you. A couple of double-barrel blasts to the head with the shotgun secondary fire will be enough to kill the beast, and that's the end of the level.

2 The Cathedral

You start the level smack bang in the middle of a horde of Leapers. The key is to keep moving, as they attack from all sides, and blast away with the Carbine or shotgun. Once you've killed them all, immediately turn to face the boarded door at the end of the Cathedral. Approach the boarded door, and get close enough so that when the two Steelheads barge on through you can lob a couple of grenades at their feet to blow them away. If you haven't got any grenades, strafe around to avoid their Auger rounds and take them out with the Bullseye. Once they're dead, proceed into the room they came from, grabbing the Auger on the way, and take out the handful of Hybrids and the Howler in the second half of the Cathedral. Then grab Intel Document #10 from the shelves in the back left corner.

Keep moving in this attack from all sides

Intel Document #10

The next section of the level is pretty straightforward, just use the cover as much as possible in order to take out all of the Hybrids, and eventually you'll come to a courtyard with two Howlers in it (shotgun them both). Immediately after this courtyard is a field. Whip out the Auger and slowly enter the field area. When the Hedgehog mines launch up into the air, use the Auger's secondary fire to create a shield to block the darts. There are numerous mines in this area, so keep your Auger equipped for the time being. Sometimes the mines will be Radial mines, which the Auger shield isn't effective against, so you need to judge the height of the Radial mine – if it's low, jump its blast radius, and if it's high; duck it.

Get to the wooden bridge, and drop down into the ditch, following it all the way in the direction that you came to get Intel Document #11.

Fallout Man © Sony Computer Entertainment America

■ Expect cameos from Tori Spelling

■ ...and Sarah Jessica Parker

» Intel Document #11

» Don't just stand there – move!

» Intel Document #12

Proceed through the remainder of the level, using the same techniques for all of the mines and putting an end to all the Hybrids and Steelheads you encounter. When you come upon a sentry turret at the end, simply shoot the stack of power cells to the right of it to take out the gunner, and head onwards to the end of the level.

3 Outgunned

Welcome to the most intense fight you will have experienced in the game so far. You're confined to a relatively small area, but there are Hybrids galore so make good use of the cover, and gradually make your way around either side of the roundabout until you have flushed them all out. Just when it seems like you've won the fight, a dropship will drop a container load of enemies to the south of the roundabout, where you entered the level. Now you'll have a heap more Hybrids and a couple of Steelheads to contend with. Work your way through them, and head down to the container they came out of and turn to face the north.

» Cover is your friend, circle around the roundabout, killing EVERYTHING

From the north will come a Stalker, a large enemy mech with a devastating machine gun arm. If you stay out in the clear, you're dead, as the Stalker will ignore your comrades and keep a constant bead on you. Instead, quickly dash into the container the enemies came from. The Stalker won't be able to reach you, and will eventually start chasing some of your allies. When it has moved away and is facing away from you, quickly run out and shoot the weak spot on its back with your Carbine rifle. It will be stunned momentarily, so keep shooting until it starts moving again, and then retreat into the container again. Repeat this tactic a few times and you'll win the battle without losing any health, or using any grenades. Onward to the next level!

NOTTINGHAM

1 Into The Fire

The easiest way up the hill is to find some cover, take out any free roaming Hybrids first, then rush up when the gun turret operaters aren't looking and shotgun gun them from the side at point blank. Head up through the trenches, using grenades and or shooting the explosive barrels to take out Hybrids three or four at a time. Keep zig-zagging through the trenches and up the hill, and eventually you'll come to a trench with a sentry gunner in it. Make a break for the hole to the left in front of the sentry gunner, pass through the room and then surprise the gunner from the side. Then head down the next hole to the right to grab Intel Doucument #12.

Head further up the trench to a house and lob a frag grenade into the door. The chain reaction this creates with the explosive barrels should eliminate the four Hybrids in the room, but if not then shoot the remainder and enter the house. Grab Intel Document #13 on the desk at the foot of the stairs. Proceed up to the second floor and kill everything in the room to finish the level.

» Intel Document #13

2 Conduits

Move up to the gate ahead of you where you'll meet this huge bastard:

» Clash of the Titan

It's a Titan! Back the hell away from the gate he just blew apart and onto the train tracks, and equip your Bullseye. Keep moving so he doesn't get close to you as his melee attacks are deadly, and if you see him charging up his gun then just start strafing to avoid its blast. Otherwise, tag him in the head and blast away. It'll probably take a couple of tags and about 150 shots, but you should get through the fight without a scratch (NOTE: When the Titan starts squealing and bursting into flames, get the hell away from him before he explodes).

Proceed through the gates to get the L23 Fareye sniper rifle. Get a few practise shots off on the Hybrid storming down the ramp opposite window, but don't try and take them all out from here, just head down below. Head through the trench and up the hill on the other side. Here you'll encounter too many Hybrids to mention, so keep on shooting them, and then retreating back into the trench whenever you need more ammo or health. Eventually the number of Hybrids will thin a bit, but if you stay in this area they'll never stop so you've got no choice but to rush up the ramp with the shotgun in order to stem the tide. Then proceed to the right and down the hill to a warehouse, in which you'll find a few more enemies, Intel Document #14 and the end of the level.

» Intel Document #14

3 "Viper's Nest"

This level is short and relatively easy. Just use the Bullseye technique on the Titans, and kill as many Hybrids on the ground as you can with the sniper rifle from up above. The second Titan you face will trigger the end of the level.

Deadlier than ALF

Uglier than Chewbacca

CHESHIRE

1 No Way Out

You literally begin this level in the firing line, so quickly scurry to either side of the smoky tunnel and wait for the Chimera to pour out. There are six of them, and when they're all dead you can head through the smoke where you'll encounter four more. The next bit of the level appears to be a confusing maze of tunnels at first, but the path you take is actually quite linear. Pass through a cafeteria and through some more tunnels, and at the end of this series of tunnels turn left and enter a short tunnel to grab some grenades and sniper ammo.

Not a good time to go and make a coffee

He didn't die in vain

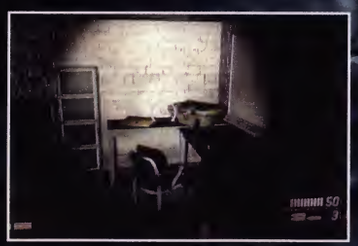
Then in the next room you'll find Intel Document #15 on the floor.

Intel Document #15

When you reach the train carriages, search the rightmost carriage for some more grenades. Then head onwards until you meet some wall-clinging Slipskulls. There are two techniques to consider if you want to kill these guys. They're incredibly fast moving, so one way to nail them is by using the sniper rifle's secondary fire to slow down time and get them with a headshot. If you're out of sniper ammo, you can study the pattern they move in, and then pre-empt where they're going to land, nail them with a Bullseye tag and shoot the crap out of the bastards.

Slipskulls – very slippery indeed

Once you've killed them, search the rooms on either side of the hallway. The second room on the right has a tunnel that leads to Intel Document #16. You'll also find the air-fuel grenades.


Intel Document #16

Proceed to the end of the hall, into the fresh tunnel on the left side at the end and make your way to a large round room with two Howlers at the bottom. Shotgun them both and proceed to the end of the level.

2 Secrets

It's basically back the way you came from here, mowing down everyone in your path until you get to this point:

Take a deep breath...

When you move through this doorway, the door behind you will close and you'll be exposed without much cover. Head to the right of the stairs to take what little cover there is, and snipe the enemies as they come through on the catwalk overhead. Continue to snipe the ones that enter from the left down below, or just grenade them if they're in a clump.

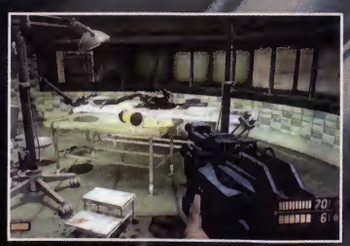
The remainder of the level shouldn't pose too much of a problem, although it's worth pointing out that when you reach a series of fleshy white pods in a winding tunnel later on, you should throw an air-fuel grenade into their midst to incinerate them. Otherwise if you get too close they'll erupt into Leapers and you'll have to expend a heap of ammo. When you reach the Map room, the level ends.

3 Angel

Head into the morgue and shoot the explosive barrels to kill the bulk of the Menials. Mop up the rest, and then grab the Intel Document #17 on the table in the middle of the room.

Intel Document #17

Smash through the windows on the right side of the morgue and head up the stairs. Halfway up the stairs, lob a few grenades through the windows upstairs to take out the Hybrids, and pick off any stragglers with the shotgun. Head through the two rooms and melee the stopper out from beneath the cart with explosive barrels on it, and watch it roll down the slope and kill the Hybrids at the bottom. Then follow it down and enter the autopsy room to the right where you'll find Intel Document #18"


Intel Document #18

Down at the end of the winding hall you'll be greeted with this gruesome scene:

We were so scared we couldn't keep the camera straight

If you manage to shoot the tall, skinny Gray Jack then your ally will survive and be able to fight alongside you. It's a good idea, given that you will then have to face a total of 10 of these freaky bastards in the one claustrophobic room. It's easy to get overwhelmed as they rush straight for you, but the best option is to camp at either end of the room with your sniper rifle drawn, and as each one emerges from its tank just cap them in the head using the slow motion secondary fire. If you run out of bullets, there is some sniper ammo right in the middle of the room. This fight really isn't as hard as it first seems.

The level isn't over yet, but just use the Fareye or the Bullseye to take out all of the Hybrids attacking the steel cylinder in the next area. Eventually a vehicle will break through the far wall, at which point just lob an air-fuel grenade at its entrance to vapourise everything that comes out. End of the level.

SOMERSET

1 Search And Rescue

This level is one of the shortest in the game, but it's still reasonably intense. At the beginning you get the Hailstorm weapon, which is fun but fairly useless for its primary fire, but its secondary fire – which sets up an automatic cannon – can be useful when you're overcome with enemies. Kill every enemy in the street until you reach a point where a bus is blocking the road, then turn around and head all the way to the end of the street to a grassy area, in which you'll find Intel Document #19.

Head back to the other side of the bus, and kill everything that moves. If you find yourself overcome then it's a good idea to use the aforementioned Hailstorm secondary fire. After you've killed a fair few Hybrids and some Slipskulls, the level ends.

Intel Document #19

2 Common Ground

This is one of the easiest levels in the game. Your buddy Cartwright will automatically man the jeep's turret for you, so just drive around running over Hybrids while he shoots the ones you miss. When you've cleared out the Hybrids that surround each of the large domes, park the jeep out front so that Cartwright can cover you, head inside the dome and upstairs to kill whatever's left and activate the switch. You can pretty much apply this strategy over and over for each of the enemy structures you come upon. Make sure that when you head through the first gate, take a right to find the shack below with Intel Document #20 in it. But otherwise you shouldn't need any help with this level.

Circle, shoot, circle, shoot...

Intel Document #20

3 A Disturbing Discovery

That's the end of the jeep. Make your way through the first building and exit it through the small door to the left. Use your Auger to take out the two Hybrids and then Steelhead, and then head to the back of this area to grab Intel Document #21.

Intel Document #21

Head back into the building and out through the other door to get the XR-004 Sapper (aka the gun that fires the huge globs of plastic explosive). Proceed through the rest of the level using the usual tactics, sniper rounds for Gray Skulls and Slipskulls, grenades for Hybrid clusters and so on. You'll eventually rejoin Cartwright and head down the bottom the Chimeran structures. When you exit out the otherside you'll see a winding path headed up to the left. Before you head up the path, move around to the left of the doorway you just exited to find Intel Document #22.

Intel Document #22

Then head up the winding path and the level will end – as will this guide, at least for this month. Congratulations, you're now halfway through *Resistance*, with all of the Intel Documents collected so far!

DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE OF OPS FOR PART TWO OF OUR RESISTANCE GUIDE!

"Mr Pinchy? Is that you ARRRRRGGHH!"

SKILL POINTS

Ratchet and Clank veterans will no doubt be familiar with Insomniac's penchant for packing its games with skill points. Here's the complete list of skill points in *Resistance*.

General Skill Points

- Reading is Fun! (2 points) – Collect 10 "Intelligence Documents"
- Chicks Dig Eyestrain (3 points) – Collect 20 "Intelligence Documents"
- Too Many Secrets (7 points) – Collect ALL "Intelligence Documents"
- In For a Penny (1 point) – Kill 3 Hybrids with 1 grenade
- Fetch (2 points) – Kill a Howler with a grenade
- Acupuncture is Cheaper (2 points) – Kill 3 enemies at once with a Hedgehog
- Why Are Those Candles Screaming? (3 points) – Kill 8 Hybrids with fire in 20 seconds
- Lovely Parting Gifts (2 points) – Squat over 15 dead Hybrids
- Tag, You're It (2 points) – Kill 5 enemies with the Bullseye in 30 seconds
- Gasping for Air (3 points) – Kill 2 Hybrids within a chapter AFTER you have severed all of their hoses
- Nowhere to Hide (3 points) – Kill 5 enemies in a single chapter by shooting them through a wall with the Auger
- Twirly-Whirly (3 points) – Kill 5 Menials with a Bullseye Trap
- Turrets (3 points) – Use a Chimeran turret to kill 6 enemies
- Mechanical Thumbs (5 points) – Complete the game on Hard skill level

Location specific Skill Points

York

- Supersonic Meat Cubes (3 points) – Kill 3 Leapers with a Frag Grenade
- Homing Beacons (3 points) – Tag 4 Hybrids with the Bullseye
- Chimera Pate (3 points) – Run over 10 enemies with the tank

Grimsby

- Don't Worry, Insurance Has It Covered (3 points) – Break at least 5 Chimeran boxes in the Conversion Center
- 20th Sentry (3 points) – Don't get shot by a mine in the Conversion Center
- Personal Space Bubble (4 points) – Don't let a Menial grab you in the Conversion Center

Manchester

- Lightfoot (4 points) – Take no damage from mines
- This is My Rifle, This Is My Gun (2 points) – Defeat the Stalker using only the Carbine

Nottingham

- In One Ear, Out The Other (2 points) – Get at least 5 head shot kills

Cheshire

- Passive Aggressive (3 points) – Kill 4 Hybrids or Menials with collateral damage
- We've Lost the Security Deposit Anyway (2 points) – Break 10 medical lamps in Northern Command
- Mirror, Mirror (3 points) – Destroy all glass in all 3 chapters

Somerset

- Next Speed Trap, 50 Miles (3 points) – Make it through "Common Ground" in under 7 minutes and 45 seconds
- I Can See My House From Here! (2 points) – Jump at least 50 meters in the Lynx jeep
- Misplaced Aggression (2 points) – Blow up all the cars in the town in "Search and Rescue"
- They Came From Behind (3 points) – Run over 3 Hybrids while driving in reverse
- I Believe This Is Yours (3 points) – Use only Chimeran weapons in "A Disturbing Discovery"

Bristol

- One Eye Dog! (3 points) – Kill a Howler using the Fareye
- A New Kind of Sourdough (4 points) – Kill every enemy in the kitchen using only the Sapper
- Pint In One Hand, Darts In The Other (2 points) – Shoot the center of 4 dartboards with the Fareye

Bracknell

- Karma's A Bitch (3 points) – Kill all enemies with their native weapon
- This is MY House (4 points) – Don't let any Chimera stand on the mining platform in the Chimeran Tunnels for more than 10 seconds

London

- Leapin' Lizards (3 points) – Take NO damage from Rollers
- Fast Like The Tortoise (2 points) – Take NO damage from Slipskulls

Thames

- Le Parkour (4 points) – Complete "Giant Slayer" in under 4 minutes

Tower

- Breakin' the Law (3 points) – Destroy the reactor without using the LAARK
- Vanilla Only, Please (4 points) – In "Last Hope", reach the reactor without using grenades or secondary fire
- What Would Hale Do? (2 points) – Kill an Angel using only the shotgun
- Return to Sender (3 points) – Shoot 5 objects thrown at you by an Angel before they hit you

Skill Point Rewards

Concept Art Pack 1	10 points
Concept Art Pack 2	20 points
Behind the Scenes	40 points
Flip Levels	70 points
Clank Backpacks	100 points
MP Mechanic Skin	126 points

MP Soldier Skin
Complete game on Superhuman

MP Mechanic Head Skin
Superhuman and all Skill Points

Movie Player
Complete game once

EXPERT TIPS, TRICKS & TACTICS!

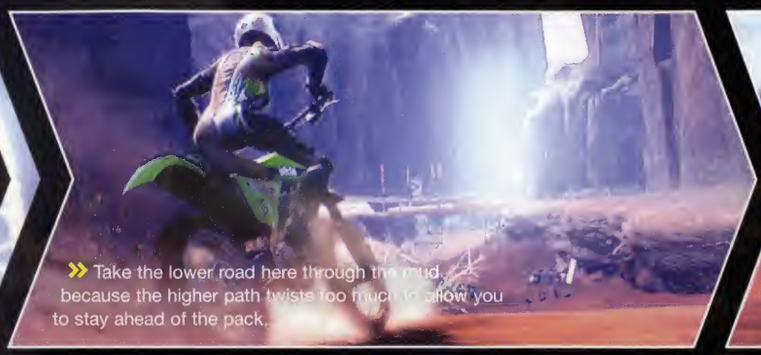
HELP

MOTORSTORM

Steal some dirty tricks from *OPS* and leave the rest eating your dust!

THE GRIZZLY

OPS' favourite course is an open sprawling canyon area with low-lying mud flats and extremely dangerous canyon ridges.

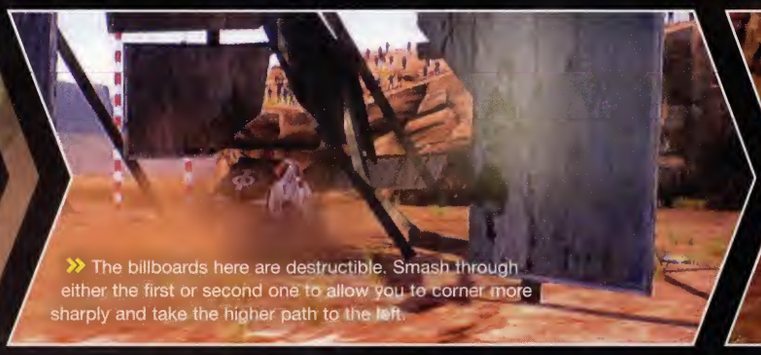


» Take the lower road here through the mud because the higher path twists too much to allow you to stay ahead of the pack.

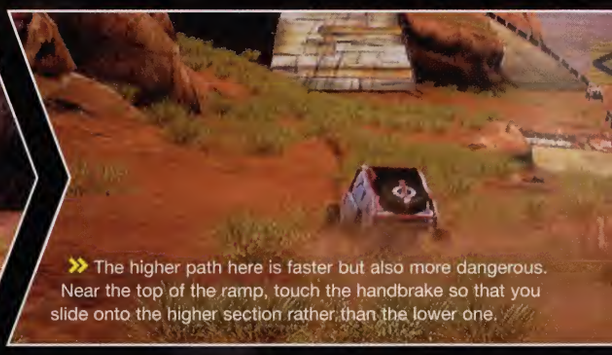
» Head for the ramp on the far right of this area to get up to a high ledge. Make a hard left at the top of the ramp to make the next ramp.

RAIN GOD MESA

A terrifying track perched along the ridge of an enormous cliff, where one wrong turn means instant death.



» The billboards here are destructible. Smash through either the first or second one to allow you to corner more sharply and take the higher path to the left.



» The higher path here is faster but also more dangerous. Near the top of the ramp, touch the handbrake so that you slide onto the higher section rather than the lower one.

DUST DEVIL

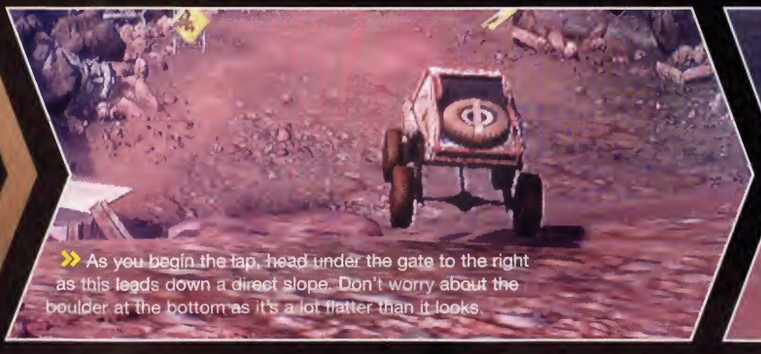
A super speedy sprint through the desert with some insanely dangerous jumps.

» During the first section of the track there are many rocky sections like this that you can cut through to get a better racing line. Make sure you line them up properly though.

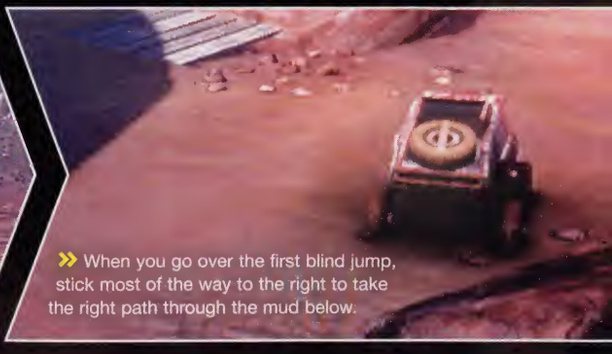
» When the track splits here make sure you take the path to the right. It leads to a higher ledge and a bridge that are much more direct than the left path.

TENDERISER

This muddy canyon run is one of the most dangerous tracks because it's filled with boulders and you have next to no traction on the mud.



» As you begin the lap, head under the gate to the right as this leads down a direct slope. Don't worry about the boulder at the bottom as it's a lot flatter than it looks.

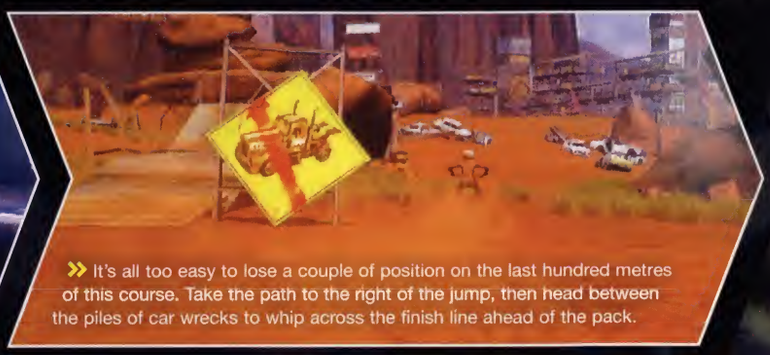


» When you go over the first blind jump, stick most of the way to the right to take the right path through the mud below.

MASTER CLASS

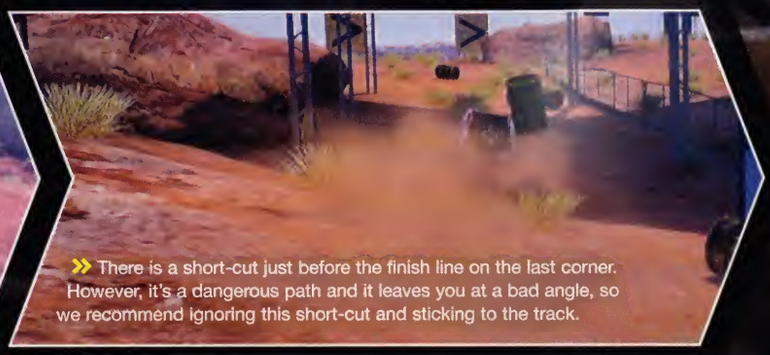
Normally you want to avoid blowing your engine but it can actually be a great tactic as you near the finish line on the final lap. Blowing you engine with catapult your vehicle a good 20 metres through the air, which can often be used to gain a last-minute place.

» Taking the previously mentioned ramp on the ledge will allow you to jump up to this higher middle road. This is the fastest route through this section. Perform a hard right at the end of the bridge to avoid falling off the edge.



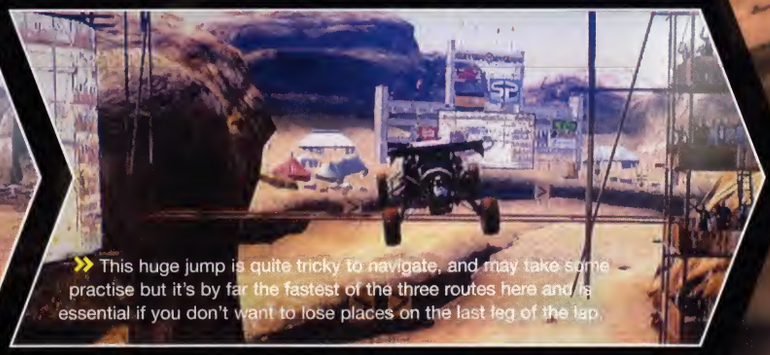
» It's all too easy to lose a couple of position on the last hundred metres of this course. Take the path to the right of the jump, then head between the piles of car wrecks to whip across the finish line ahead of the pack.

» During this long open corner you want to hug the lower inside of the corner. Because you are travelling so fast you can get away with driving along the near-vertical cliff.

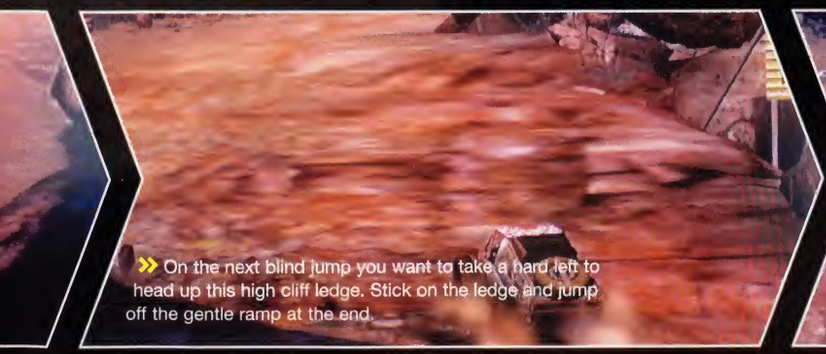


» There is a short-cut just before the finish line on the last corner. However, it's a dangerous path and it leaves you at a bad angle, so we recommend ignoring this short-cut and sticking to the track.

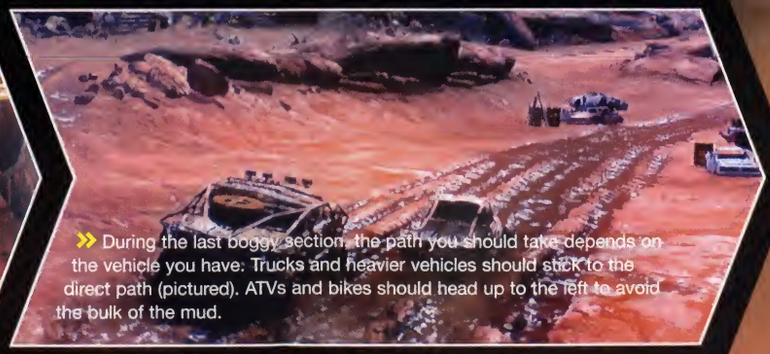
» A little while after the bridge you will see a rocky ledge leading off to the left. Head up here, then aim between the piles of tyres to get the right line to leap over the canyon.



» This huge jump is quite tricky to navigate, and may take some practise but it's by far the fastest of the three routes here and is essential if you don't want to lose places on the last leg of the lap.



» On the next blind jump you want to take a hard left to head up this high cliff ledge. Stick on the ledge and jump off the gentle ramp at the end.



» During the last boggy section, the path you should take depends on the vehicle you have: Trucks and heavier vehicles should stick to the direct path (pictured). ATVs and bikes should head up to the left to avoid the bulk of the mud.

RE-PLAY

Think you've seen and done everything in your game collection? Wrong!

WHAT IS RE-PLAY?

Do you play a game once from start to finish, shelve it and move on to the next? Tsk tsk, dear reader. You're really not getting enough bang for your buck. Which is why we created the Re-Play section, to delve back into your collection and challenge you to do and see things you may have missed on your first play through. Each month we're going to set records for you to break, expose cheats for you to try and uncover secrets for you to seek out. We also want you to participate by setting challenges for other readers to attempt or sending in funny screenshots from your latest gaming session. We also do requests, so if there's a particular game you want us to crack wide open, let us know. Email us at ops@derwenthoward.com.au or snail mail us at OPS Re-Play, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW, 1355.

OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

RICKY PONTING INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2007

With the World Cup currently in full swing over in the Caribbean, we figured we'd mark the occasion by setting up a record breaking run chase of our own in *RPIC2007*. The challenge is this; set the game to Slog difficulty, and play a 10 over match against England as Australia. You must bat first, and the objective is to make the biggest score you can in the 10 overs. Luke and Tristan gave it a crack and limped to a respectable 5-149, but we think you can do better. Take a picture of your batting scorecard at the end of the innings, mark your entry as 'Re-Play Challenge – RPIC2007' and refer to the giveaway details on page 15 for entry instructions.. Competing entries with the same score will be decided by wickets fallen, or lastly by the individual top score of the batsmen. Highest score wins a hot new game, so get cracking!

OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

GUITAR HERO II

It's been out since November, so we expect that you've all mastered the Expert level by now. What's that? You haven't? Pfft... Okay, so neither have we. Which is why we're making this *Guitar Hero II* challenge for the Hard difficulty only. We want you to take your highest scores from Carry On Wayward Son, Sweet Child O' Mine and YYZ, and add them together for the one ultimate total. Our resident guitar freak Tristan's top scores are 223,486, 219,251 and 186,737 for the respective songs, giving him a combined total of 629,474 (which incidentally, is one louder than 629,473). We know you can beat him, so take a picture of your highest score for each of the three songs, mark your entry as 'Re-Play Challenge – *Guitar Hero II*' and refer to the giveaway details on page 15. Limber up those fingers and get ready to rock, and you could win a game!

READER CHALLENGES

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

We want your challenges! Whether you've set an awesome lap time in *MotorStorm*, or you've pulled off an incredible insane stunt in *GTA: Vice City Stories*, we want to hear about it. To throw down the gauntlet to your fellow *OPS* readers, check out the address details under the 'What is Re-Play' section at the top of this page and send in today! We'll print your challenges in these very pages!

CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Seen something funny in a game? Send it in!

VIRTUA TENNIS 3

Is anyone else a little creeped out by the way the players talk to you during *Virtua Tennis 3*'s World Tour mode? It's not so much the things the say, but the way they stare at you with their cold dead eyes after they've said it (well, mouthed it at least). Check out what Maria Sharapova had to say to us after we won a mixed doubles tournament with her as our partner. Of course, we're used to hearing that phrase from the ladies. Well, not so much hearing it as *reading* it in Internet chat rooms. And not so much from ladies, but from middle aged men pretending to be ladies. But honestly, who would have guessed that Mrs_BradPITT63 would be a dude?!?

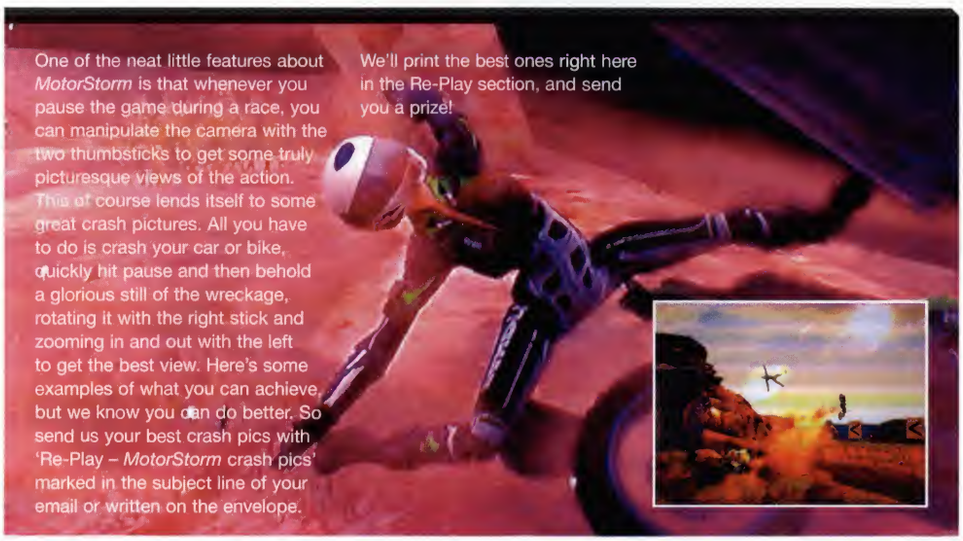
RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

We were wandering through Cheddar Gorge in Somerset, y'know, killing Hybrids and impressing the locals with our alien health regenerating ability, when we thought we'd stop for a bite to eat at the local pub. But what's with the menu? "Ham and egg with chips, corn beef with chips, bacon and eggs with chips, sausages with chips..."? Jeez, can we just get a salad? No wonder those Chimeran are so wound up, their cholesterol must be off the charts! And what the hell is "spum"? Is that a cheap knock-off of Spam? Eww... Just a coffee to go thanks – hold the chips.

MOTORSTORM

One of the neat little features about *MotorStorm* is that whenever you pause the game during a race, you can manipulate the camera with the two thumbsticks to get some truly picturesque views of the action. This of course lends itself to some great crash pictures. All you have to do is crash your car or bike, quickly hit pause and then behold a glorious still of the wreckage, rotating it with the right stick and zooming in and out with the left to get the best view. Here's some examples of what you can achieve, but we know you can do better. So send us your best crash pics with 'Re-Play – *MotorStorm* crash pics' marked in the subject line of your email or written on the envelope.

We'll print the best ones right here in the Re-Play section, and send you a prize!



RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

Hi readers, Tristan here. I've been having some problems lately. No, it's not that rash again. It's worse. It's that bloody King in *Virtua Tennis 3*! Anyone who's played the game will know that if you make it through five stages of the Tournament mode without dropping a game you'll get to face this bastard. Then it goes something like this...

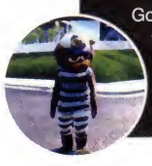
Pfft, look at him! That stupid hat and moustache. He's so smug – he's even using a wooden racquet! What, couldn't he find his monocle before he left the house this morning? Oh, I am so going to teach this old man a lesson...

Okay, it's only 0-15. We're still in this. C'mon, A-Rod? You're in form – you totally trounced Nadal in the previous match? C'mon, that dude is wearing LONG PANTS! We can take him this time...

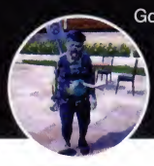
Wow, that really jumped up a notch. We made one bloody error and we lost the match?!? Just stay calm, Tristan. It's the controller. It must be broken. Yes, that's what it is – a broken controller. I'd better fix it by SMASHING IT INTO PIECES!!!

SECRET CHARACTERS – FOUND!

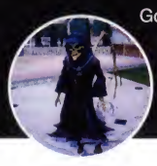
This month we've exposed some of the hidden characters in *Tony Hawk's Project 8* on PS2 and PS3.



Go to the cheats section in the options menu and enter manineedadate to unlock the Beaver mascot as a playable skater!



Go to the cheats section in the options menu and enter suckstobedead to unlock the zombie cop as a playable skater!



Go to the cheats section in the options menu and enter enterandwin to unlock the grim reaper as a playable skater!

Go to the cheats section in the options menu and enter notmono to unlock Jason Lee as a playable skater!

CODES, HINTS, TIPS, UNLOCKABLES AND MORE!

CHEATS

Get the winning edge with *OPS*' tricky cheats

PS3 PS2 PSP

NBA 2K7

From the main menu, choose Features and then Codes. Enter the following:

ABA ball
payrespect

Defensive awareness
getstops

Maximum durability for one game
ironman

Offensive awareness
inthezone

Unlimited stamina for one game
norest

All-Star uniforms
syt6cii

Bobcats secondary uniform
bcb8sta

Jazz secondary uniform
zjb3lau

Nets secondary uniform
nrd4esj

Wizards secondary uniform
zw9idla

International All-Stars team
tns9roi

NBA 2K team
bestsim

Superstar team
rta1spe

Topps 2K Sports All-Stars
topps2ksports

2007 All-Star ball
ply8mia

PS3 PS2 PSP

TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

Open up the password screen in the options menu and enter the following:

Big Realtor skater
shescaresme

Christian Hosoi skater
hohohosoi

Colonel and Security guard
militarymen

Dad and Skater Jam kid
strangefellows

Jason Lee
notmono

Photographer and Cameraman
themedia

Skinny and Real Estate Agent
sellsellsell

Nerd
wearelosers

Travis from +44
plus44

Most decks
needaride

Unlock specials in skate shop
yougotitall

Vans No Skool Gothic shoes
hatedandproud

Inkblot deck
birdhouse

Full Air stats
drinkup

PS3 PS2 PSP

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Unlock Final episode
To unlock the Final episode, first complete Sonic's episode, Silver's episode and Shadow's episode.

Unlock Audio room
Complete Sonic, Shadow or Silver's story at 100%.

Unlock Theater room
Complete Sonic, Shadow or Silver's story at 100%.

Unlock Blaze the Cat character
Complete all the Soleanna missions.

Unlock Amy Rose character
Acquire all 'S' rankings on the Soleanna mystery missions.

Unlock Rouge the Bat character
Complete all GUN commander missions.

Unlock E-123 Omega character
Acquire all 'S' rankings on GUN commander missions.

Unlock Tails character
Complete all Town Stage missions.

Unlock Knuckles the Echidna character
Acquire all 'S' rankings on the Town Stage missions.

Unlock Shadow the Hedgehog character
Complete Crisis City with Sonic.

Unlock Silver the Hedgehog character
Complete the Silver the Hedgehog boss battle with Sonic.

PS3 PS2 PSP

GHOST RIDER

Blade
Beat the game on Easy mode

Classic Ghost Rider
Beat the game on Extreme mode

Extreme mode
Beat the game on Easy mode

Ghost Rider 2099
Beat the game on Easy mode

Inifinite Link Charge
Beat the game on Easy mode

Inifinite Spirit
Beat the game on Easy mode

Invincibility
Beat the game on Easy mode

One-Hit-Kill
Beat the game on Easy mode

Turbo Mode
Beat the game on Easy mode

Ultimate Ghost Rider
Beat the game on Easy mode

Vengeance
Beat the game on Easy mode

PS3 PS2 PSP

THRILLVILLE

Enter these codes during gameplay:

Unlock all parks
□, ○, △, □, ○, △, □

Unlock all rides
□, ○, △, □, ○, △, △

Get an extra $50,000
□, ○, △, □, ○, △, ✕

PS3 PS2 PSP

ROCKY BALBOA

Unlock Apollo Creed (Rocky IV)
Beat "Apollo Creed VS Ivan Dragon" in historical fights

Unlock Dave Fossan
Beat "Rocky Balboa VS Clubber Lang 1" in historical fights

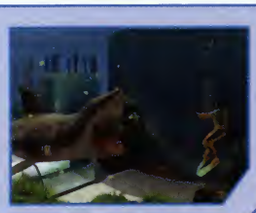
Unlock Joe Czak
Beat "Clubber Lang VS Rocky Balboa 2" in historical fights

Unlock Mason "The Line" Dixon
Beat "Rocky Balboa VS Mason Dixon" in historical fights

Unlock Rocky V
Beat "Mason Dixon VS Rocky Balboa" in historical fights

PS3 PS2 PSP

JAWS UNLEASHED

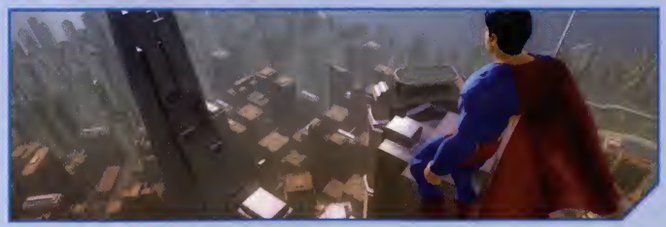


One million points
Name your profile BLOOOOD

Level select
Name your profile SHAAARK

PS3 PS2 PSP

SUPERMAN RETURNS



After completing the Warworld level, pause the game and enter the following codes. You should hear a different confirmation sound for each.

Freeroam as Bizarro
↑, →, ↓, →, ↑, ←, ↓, →, ↑

Unlimited City Health
○, →, ○, →, ↑, ←, →, ○

Unlock all power-ups
←, ○, →, □, ↓, ○, ↑, ↓, □, ○, □

God mode
↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, ○, ○

Unlock all unlockables
←, ↑, →, ↓, ○, □, ○, ↑, →, □

PS3 PS2 PSP

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3

Unlock Ex-M. Bison and Final Vega
Go through Arcade Mode once. Then go to the character selection screen, highlight M. Bison or Balrog and press SELECT

Unlock Shin Gouki
Go through Arcade Mode with Evil Ryu. Then go to the character selection screen, highlight Gouki and press SELECT

Unlock Alpha power
Beat Survival Arcade Mode with any World Tour Character

Custom Combo Charger
Beat R. Dramatic Mode with a World Tour character.

Multiple Taunt
Beat Final Battle Mode (hold L and R when selecting mode) with a World Tour character.

Status Plus
Beat Arcade Mode with a World Tour character.

Super Alpha Power
Beat Survival Original Mode with a World Tour character.

Supreme Alpha Power
Beat Survival Boss Mode with a World Tour character.

Fight Shin-Akuma in Final Battle
Hold L and R while selecting the Final Battle mode to fight Shin Akuma.

ARCHIVE

All the games that matter on the PS3, PS2 and PSP!

FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months

SPIDER-MAN 3

Release: May

Could it be the best superhero game ever made? With the power of the PS3 and the presence of classic series villians like Sandman and Venom, it's almost certain to be a classic.

SAINTS ROW

Release: May

The action blockbuster from THQ wears its *GTA* influences on its sleeve, packing in a superbly detailed city, a healthy variety of mission types and an online multiplayer mode that will allow you to experience some gang banging on the Internet without having to delete your browser cookies afterwards.

STRANGLEHOLD

Release: May

... Wait, does everything coming out in May begin with an "S"? If it lives up to its potential, *Stranglehold* should be an intensely gripping bulletfest, delivering *Max Payne*-style gun play with a level of environmental destruction that has to be seen to be believed.

LAIR

Release: June (TBC)

Developer Factor 5 honed its flight combat design skills with the excellent *Star Wars Rogue Squadron* series on Nintendo 64 and GameCube, and now it's ditched the X-Wings in favour of scaly dragons. It's dogfighting – only these dogs breathe fire!

PS3

WHY GET IT?

- Best weapons ever created. Period.
- More action on-screen than you'll believe.
- Did we mention 40-players online?
- Top-notch two-player co-op.
- Surprisingly original storyline.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 10

VERDICT: The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made.

BLAZING ANGELS: SQUADRONS OF WWII Score: 7
It's not without its flaws but if you want a whiff of the air up there you could do a lot worse.

CALL OF DUTY 3 Score: 7
Call of Duty 3 is a solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter. Grab a copy of *Resistance* instead.

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3 Score: 8
Still one of the best two-player games around, with visuals that will knock the wind out of you.

FORMULA ONE CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION Score: 9
F1CE looks awesome and plays just as well. F1 fans, you have been called.

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES Score: 7
Battlelines is a game that brims with potential, but fails to live up to it. Shallow fun if you're up for it.

GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE Score: 5
Flashy graphics can't hide the plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE Score: 9
It's next gen as all hell. On PS2 it was damn good – on PS3 it's a must-have!

NBA 2K7 Score: 8
Technically the best b-ball sim on the street, but that won't mean much to average punters.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON Score: 8
A bit more Paul Walker than Vin Deisel, but still a solid racer and worth a look for series fans.

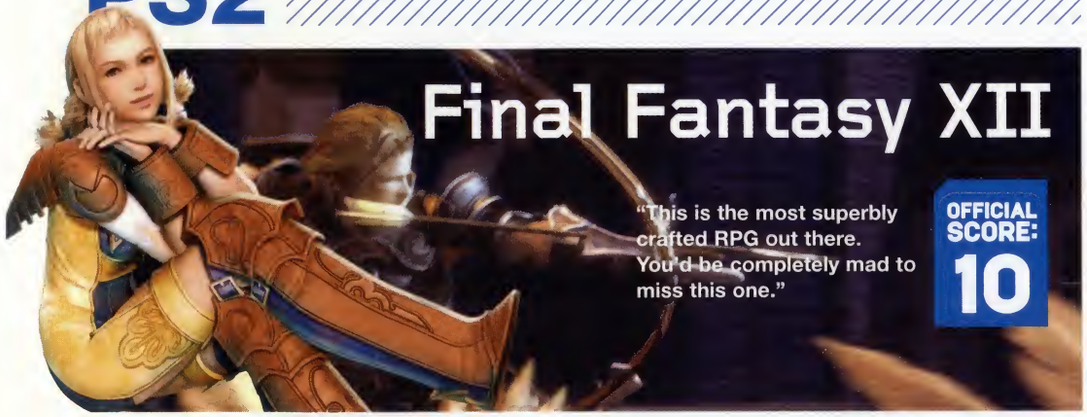
NHL 2K7 Score: 8
A snappy hockey game with everything a fan could want, unless you already own the PS2 version.

MADDEN 07 Score: 8
Visually polished, tactically deep and plenty of fun – *Madden* still rules the NFL roost.

RIDGE RACER 7 Score: 9
Faster, sexier and more gravity defying than Jessica Alba bungie jumping. The best *Ridge Racer* yet!

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07 Score: 9
A solid step forward for the best golf franchise in gaming. Tiger's never looked so good!

PS2



CALL OF DUTY 3 Score: 9
Another jewel in the *COD* crown. One of the PS2's best first-person shooters.

CANIS CANEM EDIT Score: 9
The game formerly known as *Bully* is more fun than having Jack Black as your substitute teacher. Sound the bell – school's in, suckers!

GHOST RIDER Score: 8
Fun and frantically paced, *Ghost Rider* is the goods. Far better than its budget price suggests.

GUITAR HERO II Score: 10
Guitar Hero II is arguably the greatest PS2 game of 2006, and undoubtedly the gnarliest music game ever made.

JUSTICE LEAGUE HEROES Score: 8
JLH doesn't offer as much brawling fun as *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* but it's a more considered package on the whole.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON Score: 8
A few faults mar an otherwise impressive racer that'll rev the engines of *Need for Speed* fans everywhere.

OKAMI Score: 9
Don't let this cult classic in the making pass you by. Absolutely mesmerising.

SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS Score: 8
Scarface is close to being a ripper of a game. Its lack of imagination and innovation hold it back slightly.

SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT Score: 9
Sam Fisher's latest is smart, pretty and it'll keep you up all night. Pretty much how we like our women too.

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS. RAW 07 Score: 8
While not revolutionary, *SVR2007* is without a shadow of a doubt, the best wrestling game yet.

PSP

DUNGEON SIEGE Score: 8
Long live the new king of action RPGs.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES Score: 10
Not only is this a brilliant game, it's arguably the second best *GTA* game available next to *San Andreas*. Get it now.

GUN: SHOWDOWN Score: 8
A damn good port of its PS2 big brother, with plenty of multiplayer extras to boot!

KILLZONE: LIBERATION Score: 7
Serves up some solid action, though a little repetitive at times. Multiplayer is a blast.

LUMINES II Score: 8
Updated skins and music, but still the same old *Lumines* we know and love.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: RIVAL SWORDS Score: 9
A top-rate conversion that stands up to its PS2 big brother.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6 Score: 8
Fun, easy to play and challenging enough to offer real longevity. Is there anything this series can't do?

THE WARRIORS Score: 8
A fantastic game in its own right, but only essential for those who don't already have it on PS2.

V8 SUPERCARS 3: SHOOTOUT Score: 7
It looks good, it sounds good and it has a tonne of options – but the handling is more arcade than sim.

MAGIC MOMENTS

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!

THE GAME: Metal Gear Solid
THE CONSOLE: PSone
THE YEAR: 1998
THE MOMENT: The original *Metal Gear Solid* delivered enough magic moments to keep this column going for months if not years all on its own, which is probably why it's revered as one of the finest titles produced for the PSone – if not one of the greatest games ever made.

However the absolute standout moment from Kojima's influential classic for us is still the boss fight with Psycho Mantis. Solid Snake's one-on-one with the warped, gasmask-clad psychic psychopath didn't just poke through the 'fourth wall' separating the characters in the game from you, the player in the real world – it absolutely levelled it.

Firstly, Psycho Mantis invades your memory card and picks out any other Konami games that you've played, as a demonstration of his ability to read your mind. He even passes judgement on your saving strategy up to that point in the game – whether you've been playing it too safe or not. Creepy.

Then in order to show his power of telekinesis, Mantis instructs you to put down your DualShock – which he then moves with the power of his mind, setting off the vibration motors in the controller and causing it to wobble sideways accross your carpet or coffee table.

With you already in a state of complete bewilderment, Mantis finally shouts "Blackout!" and the screen goes completely blank except for the word "HIDEO" in the top right corner of the screen. But it gets better.

The lights come back on and you begin the fight with Mantis, only to find that he can infuriatingly pre-empt each of your attacks and remain completely unscathed. It's only when you figure out that you have to unplug your controller and insert it into controller port two that his hold on you is broken. Mantis cries "Why couldn't I read your mind?!" as you smack him all over his office, and you're filled with the satisfaction of not only beating the boss, but getting the better of the game itself. There's never been another boss fight like it.

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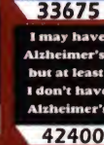

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PlayStation 2

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